

# DOING TIME



175

YEARS OF  
WINCHESTER  
PRISON

LIZ KAVANAGH AND LEONIE MOUNTNEY



**Being in jail is lonely at night  
Waiting for letters and emails that haven't been written  
Depending on bros that just do not bother  
Who let you down time and time again**

**It is sitting on my bed behind my door  
Nothing to do but think and think  
It is about finding myself and what I am made of  
It's my past, present and future**

**I have been addicted to crack  
I have strayed from the right track  
Now I just want to go back  
My mum is left broken-hearted  
I just want to go back to before it all started**

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**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**



HMP  
WINCHESTER

## Foreword

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HMP Winchester sits at the heart of an affluent, historic city, yet most local residents will probably walk past it regularly without giving those living and working here a second thought. Its tower might be a prominent landmark on the Winchester skyline but in many ways it is a largely forgotten community within a community – despite having a huge role to play.

Prison is often perceived as a place that 'other people' go to. But being on remand or convicted of a criminal offence that leads to time in prison can happen to anyone, at any time.

In 2020, 1,800 men passed through Winchester Prison. By the time they leave, every one of those men will have met with tens of professionals – in healthcare, training, education, wellbeing, family outreach, probation and resettlement. The prison officers who work on the wings can be peacekeepers, mental health workers, social workers and emergency medics – all within 15 minutes.

Life inside prison is not easy – for anyone. Our 280 staff work round the clock every day of the year and are rarely heralded as community heroes – despite the huge challenges they face to protect both the public and the men in our care.

Their work during the Covid-19 pandemic when, at its most challenging, men were locked in cells for as many as 23 hours a day to reduce infection, went largely unheralded. It is rare that a prison makes headlines without negativity attached.

This book, commemorating 175 years of HMP Winchester, provides an overview of the many individuals who make up the prison – from teachers and prison officers to the prisoners themselves. Their stories have been written as they have been told – without agenda.

They reveal the huge challenges that Winchester Prison faces daily as well as the dedication of the people who work here. They shed light on the reality of trying to rehabilitate and reform prisoners and the frustration of a system where reoffending is far too common. They also provide an opportunity for some of our prisoners to share how prison has impacted their lives and made a positive contribution to their future.

In an era where the prison population continues to rise, Winchester Prison continues to respond to the challenges. As prisoners' mental health needs become more complex, we continue to offer support. As the incidents of violence towards our staff steadily become more frequent, we continue to treat men with respect and compassion.

Working in a prison is not for the faint-hearted. But we do it because we collectively believe that everyone deserves a second chance. It is telling that for many men, prison is the first time that anyone has believed in them at all.

**JIM BOURKE, GOVERNOR**  
**JANUARY 2022**





### THE LIFE OF A VICTORIAN PRISONER

The routine of the day is: At 6 o'clock the prisoner is roused. Half an hour is allowed for him to dress, clean himself and his cell, and prepare for work. From 6.30 to 7.30, he works in his cell. Half an hour is then allowed for breakfast. The next hour, including the muster and return to cell, is devoted to the chapel. During each of the next two hours, half of the prisoners take school instruction and half take exercise.

From 11 to 1 they are devoted to work in the cell. An hour is allowed for dinner and the next after it is for exercise. From 3pm to 5.30pm they work. They have half an hour for supper and work from 6 to 8pm. One hour is allowed for reading and writing and bed is at 9 o'clock.

Description of the daily routine in an English Convict Gaol in 1865, *Cornhill Magazine*, July 1865<sup>4</sup>.

## CHAPTER

## 1

The history  
of Winchester  
prisonA MODEL VICTORIAN INSTITUTION

Rising crime was a big concern in Victorian Britain. Offences had risen steeply from 5,000 a year in 1800 to 20,000 in 1840 in England<sup>1</sup> and while small, old 'Houses of Correction' held wrong-doers for lesser offences, deportation to America, Australia or Tasmania was common. Over 200 crimes were punishable by death.

The Prison Act of 1839 proposed the building of new prisons, and, between 1842 and 1877, 90 were built or extended across England<sup>2</sup>. Many of these Victorian prisons (like Winchester) are still in use today.

The foundations for Winchester Prison were laid in 1846. Built to a radial design over six acres on an elevated site on Romsey Road, the prison boasted five wings of four storeys, radiating from a central hub carrying a turret. Large windows the height of two storeys were included in the design for the end of each wing, as was a ventilation system supplying fresh air which is still in use today.

The first prisoner arrived in September 1849. Others were moved to Winchester from local Houses of Correction and the Debtors' Prison (now the Westgate Museum) at the top of High Street. Transfers were

made from prisons in Southampton, Portsmouth and Gosport which have since closed. The prison population was a mix of segregated men and women.

Henry Barber was the first governor and John Greig deputy governor, with his eldest son, also John, appointed as assistant schoolmaster. The Hampshire Advertiser of April 1849 listed their salaries as £340, £300 and £30 (plus board and lodging) per annum<sup>3</sup>. Prison warders were paid an average of £50 a year.

Victorian prison life was harsh. Prisoners were isolated from each other, kept alone in cells and forced to do hard labour.

When the first prisoners were sent to Winchester Prison in 1849 it boasted the most up-to-date equipment of its time, with two treadmills which could each occupy 48 prisoners, and hand-cranked (rotating paddles in sand boxes) in all cells.

Treadmills and hand-cranked were widely used across Victorian prisons<sup>5</sup>. They largely served no purpose other than to subordinate the prisoner into compliance and fitted with Victorian ideals about achieving atonement through hard work.



**CORONER'S ORDER FOR BURIAL.**  
Form prescribed by Rules made by the Lord Chancellor under the Coroners (Amendment) Act, 1926.

I, the undersigned, Coroner for the County of Hants  
of the body of Zbigniew Gower hereby authorise the burial  
aged about 23 years late of 2 Court Hill  
whose death was reported to me on 7 July 1950  
and whose body has been viewed by me\* (and by the inquest jury).  
Witness my hand this 7th day of July 1950, Coroner.  
R. J. L. Gower

\*Strike out if inapplicable.

**IMPORTANT** — This certificate must be preserved with care and delivered intact as to whom SEE BACK. The burial may be stopped if this certificate is not delivered. If it is intended to remove the body out of England and Wales, notice must be given to the Coroner in advance of the removal. A form for the purpose of cremation obtained from the Coroner. This Certificate will authorise the burial in a burial ground of the parish of a stillborn child. This certificate is of no use for the purpose of cremation. The Coroner is requested to fill in spaces 1 and 2 of Part 2 of this form (see ultimate paragraph on cover).  
**Form 101.**



*have not muscular.*

In 1950 two 23-year-olds, Zbigniew Gower and Roman Redel, robbed a bank in Bristol and planned to use the local bus service as their getaway transport. A civilian, Robert Taylor, attempted to stop them and was shot dead.

Gower and Redel were hanged side-by-side in Winchester prison on 5 July 1950. Robert Taylor received the George Cross posthumously<sup>11</sup>.



## THE TREADMILL

In Winchester Prison a treadmill was also used to draw water to the prison from a well until 1896 when running water was installed throughout.

On the treadmill, prisoners sentenced to hard labour were required to walk up a wheel holding a metal bar for 10 minutes on and five off for at least six hours a day – the equivalent of climbing 10,000 to 14,000 vertical feet. It was common for a man to be expected to perform 16,000 revolutions during the day.

The amount of effort needed by prisoners to complete a set of rotations on a hand-crank could be adjusted by a warder turning a screw on the box. Prison officers have been called 'screws' ever since.

The use of hand-cranks and treadmills was abolished in Britain in 1902 by the Prisons' Act of 1898<sup>6</sup>.

Men and women in Victorian prisons were expected to work long hours, with tasks including oakum picking, mat-making, weaving, and cleaning and maintenance around the prison.

Those who failed to fully engage with the daily toil could expect their meagre rations halved. Flogging was common.

## EXECUTION BY HANGING

Public hangings provided locals with a gruesome spectacle at Winchester Prison until they were prohibited by the Capital Punishment Amendment Act of 1868<sup>7</sup>, when they were deemed repugnant as a public spectacle.

Crowds would gather to witness the most high-profile hangings at Winchester: for example, the execution of Frederick Baker, who in 1867 murdered eight-year-old Fanny Adams, was attended by some 5,000 onlookers<sup>8</sup>. The phrase 'sweet Fanny Adams' comes from the public abhorrence of his crime, as there was said to be very little left of the child's body.

Public hangings took place on scaffolds built over the prison's main entrance, forcing the prisoner to walk some 200 yards from his cell and climb 190 stone steps before meeting his fate. Black flags marking executions were hung at the entrance until 1902.

Private hangings within Winchester Prison continued until 1965, when the Murder (Abolition of Death Penalty) Act<sup>9</sup> suspended the death penalty for murder and permanently abolished it in 1969.

Details of each hanging, including a description of the prisoner's drop, were logged in a prison ledger, which also included notes for funeral preparations and the distribution of the prisoner's property to family members after the death. Death was not always instantaneous, depending largely on the skill of the executioner.

The final execution at Winchester Prison took place on 17 December 1963, when Dennis Whitty was hanged for the murder of William Rowe during a farmhouse robbery<sup>10</sup>. Whitty had expected to find thousands of pounds hidden on the farm estate, but instead came away with the princely sum of just £4.



### WINCHESTER PRISON TODAY

In 1895 The Gladstone Committee Report<sup>12</sup>, named after its chairman, the then undersecretary at the Home Office, Herbert Gladstone, concluded that although the purpose of imprisonment should be to punish, it should also aim to reform the prisoner.

Its principles were endorsed by Parliament in the Prisons Act of 1898<sup>13</sup>, when rules for a more enlightened prison regime were laid down. In 1908 formal education began in all prisons, along with skill-based education courses to help prisoners find useful employment after their release.

That same year a healthcare unit was added within the walls of Winchester Prison to treat prisoners requiring nursing that could be provided internally. Conditions needing more intensive intervention and emergencies continue to be treated across the road at the Royal Hampshire County Hospital.

It wasn't until 1964 that any subsequent buildings were added, when a Remand Centre was created to house young offenders. In 1991 its use was changed to hold Category C men<sup>14</sup> and in 1995 it became used solely for female prisoners.

That same year the building was converted once more to become Westhill – originally for the purpose of rehabilitating women until 2004. Today the buildings are used for resettlement prisoners who are completing the final 18 months of their sentences before being released locally. In 2005 the Hearn Unit, named after Clive Hearn, a former principal officer and governor, was opened, offering accommodation for a further 40 resettlement prisoners.

In general terms the layout and fabric of Winchester Prison remain otherwise almost entirely as they were in 1846.

Winchester has been a solely male prison since 2004, with female prisoners from Winchester Crown Court now generally sent to Bronzefield Prison in Middlesex.

Today, Winchester is classed as a Category B local prison, serving men who are on remand and awaiting trial, men who have been convicted of sentences of less than 18 months and those returning to the city for resettlement release from other prisons.

The prison has an intake of around 230 prisoners per month, with over 40 per cent of prisoners serving sentences of 12 months or less, on remand or recalled from parole; this results in a high turnover of inmates.

Offenders are accommodated in separate wings. A Wing is dedicated to vulnerable prisoners, B and D Wings are for general use and C Wing is used for those on induction. West Hill, built in 1964, offers rehabilitation and training for men at the end of their sentences.

Within the prison walls there is a healthcare unit and dentistry facilities, workshops, education rooms, a chapel, an exercise yard and gym, and large kitchens.

Convicted prisoners are required to either commit to learning and training or work around the prison during the day. Evening lockdown for most prisoners is at 5.30pm and the prison day begins at 7.30am.

All cells have Freeview TV and prisoners have access to a gym and library. A Listening Service run by prisoners supported by the Samaritans is available 24 hours a day, as is medical care. Ministry from the chapel team is also on offer to all prisoners.

The prison is run by 280 staff, including 164 prison officers. It is also supported by many external volunteers.

Originally built to accommodate 385 prisoners, the prison's maximum capacity is now considered to be 690.



DOING TIME





*The underlying volatility, typical of so many local prisons, caused by high turnover and inadequate facilities, makes consolidating progress at Winchester Prison an excessively demanding task.*

INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT, 2019/20

### IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Winchester prison features in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, which was published in 1891. Alec d'Urberville is stabbed through the heart by Tess with a carving knife and she is sentenced to death by hanging at what Hardy renames 'Wintoncester Prison'.

*"It was a large red-brick building, with level grey roofs, and rows of short barred windows bespeaking captivity, the whole contrasting greatly by its formalism with the quaint irregularities of the Gothic erections. It was somewhat disguised from the road in passing it by yews and evergreen oaks, but it was visible enough up here. From the middle of the building an ugly flat-topped octagonal tower ascended against the east horizon, and viewed from this spot, on its shady side and against the light, it seemed the one blot on the city's beauty."*

During the First World War Winchester Prison housed around 100 conscientious objectors who, by refusing to contribute to the war effort in any way, were imprisoned.

Despite rules forbidding them to even talk to other prisoners, one pacifist managed to produce a secret newspaper written on toilet paper which became known as the Winchester Whisperer. It was produced in secret using hidden ink and needles as pens.

Stories were communicated using Morse code tapped out on heating pipes between the cells, with some prisoners even playing chess this way<sup>15</sup>.

On-screen aerial shots of Winchester prison were used in location filming for the 1971 science-fiction crime thriller *A Clockwork Orange*.

The prison was also the subject of a 2019 Channel 4 documentary *Crime and Punishment*, which shed light on life inside from the perspective of both staff and prisoners.

Its most high-profile criminal of recent times was Charles Arthur Salvador, better known as Charles Bronson, dubbed 'the most violent prisoner in Britain'. Bronson spent periods detained in Rampton, Broadmoor and Ashworth high-security psychiatric hospitals. He was the subject of the 2008 film *'Bronson'*, starring Tom Hardy, a biopic based loosely on his life. Bronson's extreme violence led to many prison moves, including a short spell in Winchester Prison in 1986.

Of equal note was serial killer Rosemary West, who was interned at Winchester Prison prior to her trial at Winchester Crown Court in October 1995.

As Winchester had become a male-only prison by then, West was interned in a special unit built to hold her, made from several cells in the prison's C Wing. It included her own washing machine and dryer and a visiting room where she met her lawyers. She is now an inmate at HM Prison New Hall in West Yorkshire, after being convicted of 10 murders, and is serving a life sentence without parole.



## CHAPTER

## 2

## The governor

In 2023, 2,700 men passed through Winchester Prison. Governor James Bourke was responsible for every one of them. He was also responsible for nearly 300 staff, 500 acres of buildings and grounds, 8,760 hours of security – and managing a prison during a pandemic.

His is a big job, and one that brings with it daily challenges. But it's responding to these challenges that makes it so rewarding, he says.

His is certainly a steady hand, with assaults on prison staff down significantly since he took up the reins at Winchester in 2018. The role of governor is not only to protect the outside world from those who have offended but also to look after those who serve inside too.

"It's my job to ensure that the prison runs in a well-ordered manner and meets its objectives of punishment by depriving liberty, protecting the public from harm and doing what we can to reform prisoners," says James. "But it's also about leading a big team of people working in often very challenging circumstances. A prison officer can be a peacekeeper, mental health worker, social worker and emergency medic, all within 15 minutes.

"There are few jobs where being 'on duty' is quite so demanding as it is in a prison, yet public recognition of that dedication is often lacking."

James meets with staff every day but he's also regularly on the prison wings, hearing about problems direct from the prisoners. "Usually we can put them right," he says. "Empathy goes a long way if we can't."

Not every problem can be solved. "Working as a senior cog in a service that is regularly publicly criticised for its failings is not without its challenges," he says. "A suicide, for example, is a huge tragedy for everyone. It becomes a statistic of an internal 'failing' that reveals nothing of the time that officers spent trying to help that individual or the time he spent with the mental health team, the drug or alcohol rehab team.

"It reveals nothing of the support that prisoner was given by the education and learning service and the prison chaplaincy team too. About two thirds of our men arrive in prison with serious mental health needs. That's around 1,200 every year. We've tragically lost a man a year to suicide, but we have saved many more."





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*A prison officer can be a peace-keeper, mental health worker, social worker and an emergency medic all within 15 minutes.*

Mental illness is also a huge contributing factor to offending, James says. “It makes release all the more difficult. Many prisoners rotate in and out of prison several times because they struggle to cope outside.”

Drugs remain another key challenge. “When our body scanner was first used in prison reception, 50 per cent of our new arrivals had drugs on them,” says James. “We’ve cracked down heavily but in prison there are big financial rewards for those who bring drugs in. By doing so those individuals devastate our aims to run an ordered prison and help people turn their lives around.

“It’s an ongoing battle with some family members, friends and contractors and we’ve even had abuses of legal privilege on occasion, perpetuating the problem. We also have issues with drones used to deliver illicit items. And men taking prescribed medication will sometimes use these legitimate drugs as currency.”

Winchester Prison is a reception and resettlement prison serving a number of local magistrates’ and Crown Courts. For most prisoners, time inside is transient. “We can only do so much,” says James. “Men who have served longer sentences have more opportunity to mature inside and we’re less likely to see them again than repeat, short-sentence offenders.”

Regular inspections are part and parcel of prison management. “Inspections tend to focus on tangible shortcomings,” says James. “It’s very difficult to quantify the positives we achieve every day. We worked for months with a massively reduced staff due to Covid and kept our prison safe and functional.

“And we not only met, we exceeded national prison requirements. I’m extremely proud of my staff for doing that. Their great courage and resilience make this all work. Really good work like calming an enraged prisoner, dealing with someone who is suicidal and sorting problems often goes unnoticed. The majority of those who choose this job deliver all that and more with no expectation of extra reward.”

Doing a difficult job in a difficult place is not without its challenges. “As a governor you need leadership to do the right thing at the right time and management to do things in the right way,” says James. “Running a prison is about pragmatism, while governing is all about maintaining principles. It’s not easy. But you don’t take on the role of governor at a prison expecting to lead from a boardroom.”



## CHAPTER

## 3

## What leads to offending?

Believing in the capacity of a man to change, that's what motivates head of reducing reoffending, Gary Wright. "I wasn't the best-behaved teenager," he says, "but I had the stability of a good home and good parents. My life could have been very different had I not had that."

Gary left school at 16 and served in the army before becoming a residential social worker in a secure unit for young offenders. "Like a lot of young men, I thrived on the discipline and team work," he says. "I got taken on as a trainee prison officer in 1988.

"Seeing how damaged some of the men were in prison was a real eye-opener at first," Gary says. "Many had become criminals after terrible experiences as children. Criminal gangs for some give them a feeling of belonging and protection. It made me realise how lucky I'd been with my own upbringing."

Fast forward over 30 years in the prison service and Gary is now one of the most experienced prison-based heads of reducing reoffending in the country after 15 years in the role in both HMP Kingston and Winchester. "My main responsibility is to help to reform prisoners so they desist from reoffending when they leave prison," he says.

"A lot of that work is about helping men to break the cycle of drug or alcohol dependency and providing pastoral support, education and training.

The biggest challenge for us as a local prison is having limited timescales with the men we support. A high proportion of the population are with us for less than six months, some for up to 18 months.

Wanting to change has to come from the men themselves. "Many of Winchester's prisoners are first-time offenders for whom prison isn't as much of a deterrent as it perhaps once was," says Gary. "Being incarcerated becomes part of a cycle of reoffending which often runs its course over and over again.

"Rehabilitation is a big part of prison life now. For those who thrive off the proceeds of crime, time inside is often viewed as part and parcel of a criminal lifestyle. In rare cases, some offenders will sabotage their chances of getting released because they prefer the security and consistency of prison to the unpredictability of life outside."





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*48 per cent of prisoners are reconvicted of another offence within one year of release.*

THE PRISON REFORM TRUST BROMLEY BRIEFINGS, 2019

Seeing men return to prison after being released is all too frequent an occurrence not only in Winchester but nationally too. "Success for us isn't always about releasing a man and never having him back in prison again," says Gary. "It's about trying to do something to make that man less likely to reoffend next time by helping him be better equipped physically, mentally and emotionally. We can only do so much."

Reoffending can also be a reality within the prison walls, where drugs, alcohol and mobile phones for example, command big rewards. "We have dynamic security measures in place to reduce this kind of internal crime as much as possible," says Gary, "but inevitably it does happen. Prisoners can be violent to each other and to prison staff and crime within prison is taken very seriously, resulting if necessary, in extended sentences."

Family ties are often key to whether a man will settle successfully outside prison. "For some men, children or a partner will be a motivator to help keep them out of trouble when they are released. Our work with the Spurgeons charity, for fathers in particular, is vital for encouraging men to see how important their roles as fathers are. A lot of what we do in prison is building self-esteem. Many of our men have never felt they have value or been good at anything."

Not everyone is a repeat offender. "Sometimes someone will make a big mistake or error of judgement, serve their sentence and we will never see them again," says Gary. "In those cases, the value of our education and training programmes in particular can make a huge difference. One of our recent offenders gained a qualification in barbering and went on to set up a successful business. He has since employed other prisoners."

Removing a man from the area where he has committed crime when he is released can also help. "Where we can, we try to find accommodation for men away from where they offended before," says Gary. "That's not to say it's easy to start again," he adds.

Asked what has kept him motivated in his many years in the prison service, Gary smiles. "I'm stubborn," he says. "I won't give up on anyone. It's the success stories that keep us all going. Few criminals are out-and-out villains. We see men who are tired of being on the same course of repeat offending and imprisonment and who decide that enough is enough.

"We can't 'fix' people inside but we can go a long way to providing them with the support to change for the better. And many of them do."



## CHAPTER

## 4

How prison  
changed me

"I was the sort of guy that everyone thought had the perfect life," says Tom, 43, who has been serving a 12-year sentence for his involvement in a county drugs line. "I still find it hard to understand how everything spiralled so quickly out of control."

Happily married and dad to a young son, Tom was running a successful business with a £2 million turnover before things started to go wrong. "I had a four-bedroom house in a good area, drove great cars and had family holidays across Europe every year," he says. "I also ran a local football team. I've always been passionate about sport and wanted to support my son and others like him to progress on the pitch."

But all that changed when Tom started to mix with the 'in-crowd': high-fliers who liked to party, with cocaine readily available for anyone who wanted it. "What started as a bit of fun now and again became something I was doing too often just to get a kick," he says.

The collapse of a company that owed Tom's business a sizeable sum saw him suddenly in financial difficulty. "I sold my cars, stripped down the business to the bare bones and still couldn't offset the debt," he says.

"I just couldn't accept that I'd gone from living the high life to trying to sell off anything I could in just a few months.

"I got a taxi-driving job just to make ends meet and started using cocaine as a way to lift my mood. I was depressed and working all the hours I could, often with cocaine still in my system.

"I was approached to drive local dealers from A to B and paid in drugs and cash, which at the time seemed to tick all the boxes. But it wasn't long before I found myself in circles that were orchestrating drugs that stretched across county lines to London and beyond.

"By this point I was using crack cocaine. I became a recluse to my wife and my son, working at night, when I could also use drugs, and then sleeping all day.

"I was rash with my decision-making and had an affair, which I very much regret. My life had spun completely out of control."

A police tip-off led to Tom's arrest, and text messages on his phone provided plenty of incriminating evidence, which resulted in his hefty sentence.







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*3.4 per cent of adults aged 16 to 59 used Class A drugs in the year ending March 2020. This equates to around 1.1 million individuals nationally.*

DRUG MISUSE IN ENGLAND AND WALES REPORT, OFFICE FOR NATIONAL STATISTICS, 2020

“My wife had no idea what had been happening until police turned up at our home to tell her I’d been arrested. She was devastated and divorced me shortly after I was sentenced. I’d lost my home, my marriage and my freedom because of debt and drugs. And I’d contributed indirectly to the misery of lots of other people too.”

It was Tom’s son who became his motivation for changing his life around in prison. “I knew that to get through prison I’d have to keep my head together and stay busy. I’d screwed up and let him and my family down and needed to prove to everyone that I could turn things around again.”

Tom signed up for cleaning work and education, retaking his maths and English GCSEs to achieve higher grades. He became the chapel orderly and a Samaritans Listener (see chapter 10) to support other prisoners.

By the time a gardening post came up for work outside the prison walls towards the end of his sentence, Tom had become such a trusted pair of hands that he was given the job.

“Gardening and cleaning were something I paid other people to do before I came to prison but I wanted to prove that nothing was beneath me,” he says. “One of the positive things about prison is that everyone is equal. There’s no pecking order. To get on you need to accept what you’ve done and demonstrate to the prison staff and most importantly to yourself that you’re prepared to embrace every positive that comes your way.”

Tom has got just a few months left to serve now, and knows that coming out of prison won’t be easy. “I’ll be homeless and jobless and will have to start again,” he says. “But my son will be coming to meet me at the prison gates. He’s 22 now and making his own way in life. He never gave up on me and I need to show him I can move on and be a proper dad again.

“If I hadn’t gone to prison I probably wouldn’t have had the chance to do that. In fact, the way I was going, I probably wouldn’t be here at all.”



# CHAPTER 5 Healthcare

Looking after prisoners' physical and mental health makes for a challenging workload for the head of healthcare at Winchester Prison, Gemma Wilson. Gemma works for Practice Plus Group, which is contracted by NHS England to provide healthcare to 40,000 patients at over 45 prisons in England.

Supported by 60 staff including nurses, pharmacists, GPs, dentists, opticians and mental health specialists, healthcare at Winchester Prison is very much a 'service within a service', working around prison regimes 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

Prisoners have a wide range of needs. "Everyone gets a healthcare review when they first come into prison," Gemma says. "Some men are young, fit and healthy. Others are elderly and need mobility aids. A high number come to us with existing mental health conditions and drug dependency."

Prisoners at Winchester benefit from multiple specialists under the same roof. "We take an integrated, multidisciplinary approach to healthcare at Winchester," says Gemma. "That means if a man has multiple needs, staff working in different disciplines can work out the best way to treat him collectively."

For a man with drug dependency, that can be life-changing. "Poor mental health and drug addiction often go hand in hand," says Gemma. "One leads to another and vice versa. In prison we can help men with both at the same time. Removing men from chaotic lives on the outside gives them more chance to overcome addiction.

"Prison also gives our men an opportunity to take responsibility for, and control of, their own health and wellbeing to understand the deeper-seated issues and reasons behind their criminal behaviour. A big part of what we do is to encourage men to look beyond medication and other drugs as a quick fix."

Substance misuse inside prison continues to be a challenge, however. "Despite our best efforts, we know that some of those we treat hide medication to give to others, while others are supplied drugs by visiting friends and family members," says Gemma.

Spice, which can lead to drug-induced psychosis, is particularly problematic. "It can be disappointing when we see someone we've spent lots of time with who already has challenging mental health needs expose themselves to substances that will add to their problems," she says.





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*Many prisoners enter the system with established complex needs that have not previously been diagnosed or recognised which might have played a role in their offending behaviour.*

STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR HEALTH SERVICES IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM: 2016-2020, NHS ENGLAND.

“Supporting men with mental health needs is a big part of our work and often has implications for their criminal behaviour too. Such is the need for intensive care in our healthcare unit that 10 beds are allocated for mental illness compared to five for prisoners with physical healthcare needs.”

The impact of the pandemic, with men sick and self-isolating and regimes suspended for months, has added to the pressures. “Just like on the outside, the pandemic had huge implications for mental wellbeing,” says Gemma. “We will be dealing with the aftermath from a mental health perspective for some time to come.”

In general, the healthcare team is treated with respect, but there are inevitable risks. “One man spat in my face,” Gemma says. “Other medical staff have been assaulted. We try not to internalise those incidents, because they are reasonably rare.”

When restraint is needed to prevent a prisoner harming himself or someone else, a member of the healthcare team is required to be there too. “That means that we regularly have to witness extremes of behaviour at the prison,” says Gemma.

“We don’t have the same powers as prison officers and there is inevitably ongoing risk associated with our work.”

While the team can treat day-to-day conditions, specialist healthcare is provided by the Royal Hampshire County Hospital, with prison officers accompanying prisoners to hospital and remaining with them on wards if necessary. “Prisoners typically go across to the hospital for investigative tests, X-rays and consultant care,” Gemma says. “We also use the accident and emergency department for acute care for things like heart attacks, strokes and self-harm.”

It’s the variety of the work that makes the job so stimulating, says Gemma. “Being able to offer someone the experience of multiple specialists to give them the best chance of boosting their wellbeing across the board is hugely satisfying,” she says. “If we can support a man through drug dependency, for example, we’re hopeful that he can free himself from the associated criminality that often goes with it.”

It doesn’t always work out that way. “We do get the same people back with us time and time again – but there are success stories too,” she adds. “Even a small positive in a prison can have a huge impact on both a prisoner and the people working with him.”



## CHAPTER

## 6

In the  
classroom

Education: at Winchester Prison it can be life-changing.

Education manager Matthew Hebditch has been teaching in prisons for over 25 years and looks after 27 staff at Winchester who teach everything from English and maths to barbering and painting and decorating. The teaching department is so successful that its education uptake rates are regularly among the highest in the country.

“All prisons are required to offer education as part of their provision for prisoners,” says Matthew. “In Winchester the teaching programme is subcontracted to Milton Keynes College, who manage education in several prisons.

“Teaching in a prison is very different from teaching in a school or college. There’s a wide variety of learners for a start. Some men are illiterate and have no qualifications. Others may have a PhD and have extensive work-based skills. We also have men from other nationalities who speak very little English at all.”

Breaking down barriers to make education accessible is a big part of Matthew’s job. “A lot of prisoners have preconceived ideas about what education is like or have extremely negative memories of their school days,” he says. “Others feel embarrassed about their lack of education. Our job is to make what we teach really engaging and also make it work at all levels.”

Prisoners in Winchester are split into groups according to ability, with education on offer from 8.45 to 11.45am and again from 1.45 to 4.30pm. Around 40 per cent choose to study in some form, with others instead working in the prison as cleaners, catering staff, garment manufacturers and orderlies.

At the top end, men can sign up for Open University courses, which are run remotely. Prisoners are taught in classrooms and workshops, with a prison library available to all. Crime thrillers remain the most sought-after reads, followed by self-help books. DVDs with a certificate of 15 or below can also be borrowed each week.





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*62 per cent of prisoners have a reading age of 11 or below compared to 15 per cent of the general population.*

PRISON REFORM TRUST BROMLEY BRIEFINGS, 2021

“All prisoners are tested in maths and English when they arrive,” says Matthew. “The vast majority are at a stage we would expect from an eight-year-old in a school setting. Very few have any qualifications. Some men come to us having regressed educationally due to substance misuse. We once had an Oxford graduate who struggled even with basic English because his memory had been so badly affected by drugs.”

A key focus across the education department is to help prisoners with skills that will lead to employment once they have finished their sentence. “Most of them are very aware of the importance of this,” says Matthew.

Education pays in more ways than one. “Prisoners get a very small amount to attend educational classes,” says Matthew. “It’s currently around £1 a session, but it starts to add up the more committed they are.

“Teamwork is also really important in our programmes. Many offenders have never worked positively with others in a group situation and we encourage strong learners to become mentors or classroom assistants so they can help other prisoners. Mentoring demonstrates strength of character when they come before the prison parole board or have job interviews.”

Companies like Timpson actively recruit from prisons and have an extensive selection programme that takes place within the prison walls.

“Timpson has always had a sense of social responsibility, and men who are selected go on for further training outside with lots of support along the way,” says Matthew.

Teaching is rewarding on many levels. “One of the biggest impacts of education in prison is that in a classroom the walls and bars melt away,” says Matthew. Prisoners are equals in a classroom and are all working towards a positive goal.

“The greatest reward for me and the team is when we get to see the penny drop for someone who has previously struggled with an element of their learning and suddenly ‘gets it’. They see themselves in a whole new light sometimes, a learner who can achieve, and they develop a sense of pride in that achievement too.

“For a man who disengaged with school as a child and was then held back by their lack of education and embarrassed by their illiteracy, finding they can read and write, for example, is life-changing. It also spurs fathers on to engage with their children’s learning.”

Matthew adds: “There are not many jobs where you can say you change lives every day – but that’s exactly what my team strive for. Prison can be perceived as a place where power and control are taken away, but education is about enabling people to proactively move their lives on by making the most of the many opportunities we can provide for them.”



## CHAPTER

## 7

Maximising  
potential

Recognising progress outside the classroom pays dividends across the board, says learning and skills manager Angela Wiseman. Angela's role in Winchester Prison is to oversee the contractually-provided education from Milton Keynes College, as well as to maximise on learning opportunities available to prisoners through practical training and on-site work.

"Many of our men have never achieved any formal qualifications," she says. "Others have had very negative experiences at school and so classroom learning is something they'd never even contemplate. That's what makes it so important for us to provide opportunities in other ways.

"We do this in our prison workshops, where we make garments and sandbags, and also through kitchen, cleaning and maintenance work. Working as part of a team, leading others, being trustworthy and using appropriate language are valuable life skills. Success in these skills is logged in the same way as academic progress is in our classrooms.

"Making a man employable depends on bringing out his positive qualities, and we work hard to do that. Some of the men we have here have never worked for anyone before. For others, learning to deal with conflicting opinions without reverting to negative behaviour is a massive learning curve."

Building confidence is key, says Angela. "Most of our men have never been told they're good at anything positive. Getting praise for progression gives men a feeling of self-worth and pride in their achievements, which helps with their behaviour on the wing.

"In the old days there wasn't a very joined-up system in place between prison officers working the wings and education and learning providers, whereas now we work much more closely together. Everyone benefits that way – particularly the men.

"A prison officer recently came to me about a man frustrated by his inability to read the canteen food list, which would result in regular outbursts. We worked with him on reading, starting with the basics. Not only did his behaviour improve, but he also gained a life skill."





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*Reoffending rates are reduced from 48 to 34 per cent for those engaging in education while in prison.*

PRISON REFORM TRUST BROMLEY BRIEFINGS, 2021

Being creative with the way that men can learn new skills saw Angela employ BearFace Theatre for a series of drama workshops, culminating in a performance for prisoners, family members and prison officers. “Most of the men who took part had never stood up in front of anyone in public before,” says Angela. “People were moved to tears by the performances. Lewis, one of our former prisoners (see chapter 17) expressed himself through poetry which was so good that it was featured by the BBC when he left prison. Had he not attended the workshop, we’d never have known how talented he was.”

Tracking the local job market to get men back into work following release is another part of Angela’s role. “There’s no point focusing our efforts on skills for an industry which doesn’t have opportunities locally,” she says. “Painters and decorators, caterers and baristas are particularly in demand in our release area, which is why we focus on this skill set.

“We are currently implementing an employment pathway strategy which will allow men to progress from basic roles to skilled and management work while they are in prison, with accreditation along the way. Everyone needs to feel there is progression in what they do.”

The pandemic had inadvertent positives for Angela and her team, as men confined to cells due to infection control embraced learning as never before. “For many months we had more prisoners engaging in our programmes than any other prison in the country,” says Angela.

“Because there wasn’t so much of the usual hands-on work available, men who’d previously only done that gave our in-cell learning packs a go. Staff recorded sessions when they couldn’t be in the classroom and men engaged from their cells. Regular feedback on submitted work was all the more appreciated and taken on board. As a result, we have continued to offer in-cell education so men working during the day can also learn in the evening.”

While there is no formal recognition outside the prison of many of the qualities which Angela and her team actively promote among the men inside, progress is certainly made. “If you tell a man he’s a failure because he didn’t pass a written exam, he becomes disengaged with learning as a whole,” says Angela. “Tell a man he’s a success because he’s shown that he’s able to lead others in a practical way in a kitchen and he’s much more likely to be receptive about progressing further.”

She adds, “We can’t sort out someone’s future for them, but we can show them what that future might look like if they can believe in themselves and embrace the opportunities open to them along the way.”



# CHAPTER 8 God among us

“God among us.” That’s the message that managing chaplain Reverend David Hinks brings to those inside HMP Winchester. “The Bible tells us that we were created in God’s likeness, and I believe there is good in all of us, whatever side of the wall we are on,” he says.

David heads a team of multi-faith chaplains at the prison, which includes an Imam for Muslims, a visiting Sikh minister and a Roman Catholic lay chaplain. “We are there to meet the pastoral and spiritual needs of prisoners, their families and prison staff, wherever they are on their journey of faith,” says David.

Between 15 and 40 prisoners attend the Saturday or Sunday services in the prison chapel. One of them is employed to maintain the chapel and works there every day. “Many of those who come to us do so because they want to come to terms with what they have done, and a lot of our work is offering pastoral support and a new perspective,” David says.

“Prisoners come to us looking for peace in both a spiritual and physical way,” David continues. “We had an angry young man who didn’t believe in anything go on to be baptised because he found reassurance in the Christian faith. Others simply catch us when we’re on the wings, asking for a few moments for a prayer or a chat about how they’re feeling.

“Many of the prisoners have had very little love in their lives. Some have completely shut down emotionally and feel abandoned by society. Reassuring them that they matter in the eyes of God can make a huge difference to their outlook.”

Being able to talk to David and his team as people of faith also gives the staff and prisoners a way to share their feelings in an ‘unofficial’ way. “Prisoners often tell us things that they feel they can’t tell prison officers,” says David. “They know that unless they are putting themselves or others in harm’s way we will listen to them confidentially and without judgement. Others might want us to pray with them or for someone who has died or is ill in their family.”





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*The prison chaplaincy is the ears of the prison... the part of the prison that is more or less purely there to listen to, rather than watch prisoners.*

WORDS OF A PRISON OFFICER, CARDIFF CENTRE FOR CHAPLAINCY STUDIES REPORT, 2011

Sunday services are open to all prisoners, with a regular group coming together, escorted by two prison officers. "Everyone lights a candle at the start," says David, "and the men who do come generally come for the right reasons.

"On one occasion, when several candles went missing, we kept everyone back until they had been returned. There was a great sense of disapproval among our regulars. My role and the roles of my team are genuinely respected and valued by most of the men inside."

Encouraged by the chaplaincy team, prisoners can take part in the Sycamore Tree course, a volunteer-led victim awareness programme that includes teaching on the principles of restorative justice. Learners on the programme explore the effects of crime on victims, offenders, and the wider community, and discuss what it would mean to take responsibility for their personal actions.

"As a prison chaplain I'm here for the person, not for the crime," says David. "I have been a victim of crime and I don't accept crime in any way, but everyone here is equal in the eyes of God, and I believe that if we are truly repentant, he will forgive our sins. This doesn't mean we have the right to expect those who are harmed by crime to forgive, but taking accountability for our actions is something we all need to embrace.

"I felt a definite calling to come to the prison," he continues. "Jesus asks us as Christians to live out our faith in our actions. He was someone who wasn't afraid to get his hands dirty, and I believe in that too. In Matthew 25 there is a passage that reads, 'I was in prison and you visited me.' It's often when we find ourselves in the most challenging situation that we find comfort through the support of others and experience God's love for us. There's an openness about talking about faith here that both tests and reinforces what I believe in every day.

"Whatever the circumstances, behind every crime is a broken person. Many prisoners who have made victims of others have been badly hurt themselves by broken families and failed relationships, drug addiction, mental health and circumstance. All of us have the ability to behave badly.

"For me, sharing the Christian message is about reaching people just as and where they are, showing them that faith can make a big difference in their lives and giving them hope for the future."



# CHAPTER 9

## Saying sorry

Ask Fi Wilkinson about restorative justice and she'll tell you that being confronted with the impact of their actions regularly brings prisoners to tears.

Fi is a tutor on Winchester Prison's Sycamore Tree volunteer-led victim awareness programme that teaches the principles of restorative justice to prisoners. The course, run by Christian charity Prison Fellowship, is available in prisons across England and accommodates groups of up to 20 prisoners over a six-week period. Its content is faith-based but not faith-promoting, and courses are open to those of all faiths and no faith. Volunteer tutors and facilitators pray before and after each session together.

"Sycamore Tree explores the effects of crime on victims, offenders and the wider community, and through the course we discuss what it means to take responsibility for our personal actions," says Fi. "Sycamore Tree is an accredited programme and is proven to change attitudes that contribute towards reoffending. Our work is also in alignment with the pathways determined by Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service to reduce reoffending."

For some on the course it's the first time they have thought about the consequences of what they have done and the ripple effect of those actions. "Some crimes have indirect victims and we explore how what appear to be victimless crimes, like fraud or drug trafficking for example, have big implications for the people they affect," says Fi.

"One of the ways we demonstrate this is to drop a pebble in a bowl of water. The ripples spread out and out in the same way that criminal actions do. A simple thing like that makes men really think about the impact of their actions on their victims and those victims' families and friends, as well as on themselves and their own families.

"Many men come on the course as part of their sentence plan, not knowing exactly what to expect. They soon realise it isn't without its challenges. We're very straight-talking about the offences people have committed and often this will be the first time that a man has really discussed his crime with anyone in a personal way and taken responsibility for his actions.





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*Saying sorry is a massive thing, but to stand up in front of people and actually admit to yourself in front of everyone that you're sorry, it's massive, it's emotional, it's frightening. But you've got to change your behaviour at some time in your life*

**SIMON, PRISONER, PRISON FELLOWSHIP, 2021**

“Some of our men view themselves as living outside society’s parameters, making their crimes against people they don’t know or don’t consider to be part of their community more justified. When we ask them how they would feel about their crime being committed against their own family or friends, they view it very differently.

“For most learners the most powerful element of the programme is when we bring in victims of crime to talk about how their lives have been impacted. We have one couple whose son was murdered and who have forgiven the offenders. Another couple bring in a pair of their deceased son’s shoes and photographs and place them in the centre of our circle. Having something visual like that makes the impact of crime much more personal. Hearing victims’ families’ stories – especially in person – often moves our men to tears.”

Prisoners also have an opportunity in the final session to express their remorse – some write letters, poems or create works of art or craft. Family members along with members of the community are invited in to support and bear witness to these symbolic acts of restitution, and certificates of attendance are presented by the governor and are logged on the men’s prison files. Opportunities to share remorse with direct victims can be further explored through Restorative Solutions, a not-for-profit company.

For Fi, tutoring Sycamore Tree courses and serving alongside a fully supportive team of group facilitators is motivated by her Christian faith. Despite undergoing treatment for a serious medical condition, she continued to tutor the course throughout. She says, “I told the men that I cared that much about them and that they were all of value and had great potential. So many of them had never been told this before. I really believe in what our dedicated team of volunteers do and the difference it makes.

“On one course at another prison there was a man who took up sport and bodybuilding in the prison gym and won a medal. This medal was his pride and joy. It was the only thing he had ever won.”

“On the final day of the course, he read out a letter. In it, he expressed remorse and a new understanding of his crime and made a promise to turn away from his former lifestyle. He then took out his medal. He said it was the only possession that he was proud of and truly valued, so it was the only thing he could give to his victim.”

**[www.prisonfellowship.org.uk/our-work/sycamore-tree](http://www.prisonfellowship.org.uk/our-work/sycamore-tree)**



## CHAPTER

## 10

Letting it all  
come out

It was when Sam was at his lowest point in prison that a chaplain came to see him to talk things through. “On the same day I was sentenced to 10 years, my grandad died,” he said. “He’d always been there for me through thick and thin and was someone I really looked up to. I got a much longer sentence than I was expecting and was devastated when I found out I wouldn’t be allowed to go to his funeral. I was at rock bottom and really depressed.”

Despite not wanting to talk to anyone, Sam agreed to a chaplain’s visit. And the chaplain visited every few days after that – just to talk. Gradually Sam felt able to open up. And he talked. A lot, in the end. And it helped.

“As my mental health got better, through a combination of talking, counselling and medical help for my depression with antidepressants, I realised how much I’d bottled up,” he says.

“Prison is a place where emotions run high, and over the years I’ve seen men talk a lot more about how they feel than they would down the pub. We have a lot of time to think”

Feeling better and hearing that the Samaritans were running Listener training, Sam signed up. The nationwide Listener scheme offers peer support within prisons, to reduce suicide and self-harm. Listeners are prisoners who provide confidential emotional support to their peers who are struggling to cope or feeling suicidal. They are specially selected and trained for the role by Samaritans volunteers.

“What I learnt most from the training course was the importance of letting other people speak without interruption and without judgement,” Sam says. “It taught me to be a better listener with my own family too, especially with my little girl.”

Working as part of a team with other Listeners, Sam is on call on a weekly rota to support prisoners who need someone to turn to at all levels.

“Sometimes I’ll be asked for by someone who has just come into prison who is feeling very lost and overwhelmed by what’s happened,” he says.





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*Prisoners are five to 10 times more likely to take their own lives than those in the general population, making them a high priority for the work of Samaritans.*

UNLOCKING THE EVIDENCE: UNDERSTANDING SUICIDE IN PRISONS, SAMARITANS, 2018

“On other occasions I might see someone contemplating self-harm or suicide who wants to talk about their feelings. We’re given a secure private room to talk in. It’s important that men feel they can talk openly and confidentially.

“Listeners have a duty of care so I will generally ask their permission to refer them if they want specific help – although we do ask for help directly after a listening session if someone we speak to is at risk of harming themselves or someone else.”

Every cell has access to a phone connection to the Samaritans, but Sam and the others in the team of Listeners offer fellow men understanding of what it is like to be in prison from first-hand experience.

“Acceptance for me was absolutely key for keeping my mental health in shape,” says Sam. “A sentence does come to an end for most of us. And there is hope for the future.”

Sam isn’t certain yet whether he’ll use his counselling skills outside the prison walls. But he’s achieved an NVQ in Advice and Guidance during his time inside and has also taken on an advisory role for Shelter, talking to men about finding housing outside prison.

“I’ve started doing mindfulness and have explored my Christian faith since I’ve been inside,” he says. “Being able to clear my mind and focus on a prayer for myself or someone else has really helped me. I work in the chapel as an orderly and quite often say a prayer or two while I’m working.”

He’s keen to use his listening skills when he leaves prison to support other people. “I don’t know how that will play out,” he says. “But I’d like to continue to be a Listener in some form. My family are really proud of me for doing my bit to look after the men here.

“Being a Listener has allowed me to do something positive in what, for many, feels like a very negative place. Being positive for others helps me to be positive too.”

**[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)**



Snapshot of the room: It's week six, and Donny is visibly nervous. "How are we gonna put it all together?" The group listen to Donny with shared understanding that Donny suffers with anxiety. They respond supportively and reassure him. When we evaluate the programme after the performance, Donny reflects that he's felt anxious and

was very close to self-harming. "But then I thought, it doesn't have to be like this, I've been here before but when I didn't hurt myself. I did a whole show and it was hard and I'm proud. I changed my process." The group reflect on this and nod in understanding and there are broad smiles across the room.

BearFace Theatre, 2019

## CHAPTER

## 11

Digging deep  
through theatre

Helping offenders express themselves in a positive way through theatre that's what BearFace Theatre does, with the impact of its work at Winchester Prison seen as a positive addition to its educational and rehabilitation programmes.

Based in Eastleigh, BearFace Theatre was set up in 2012 as a community interest company by Applied Theatre graduates Kate Hadley and Jennifer Walmsley who had studied together at the University of Winchester and worked with prisoners as undergraduates. BearFace Theatre's focus is to work in non-theatrical spaces with participants who do not consider themselves to be artists.

"Drama had been on offer to prisoners in the past at Winchester Prison," says Jennifer. "Our intention was to offer a theatre-based project without a script or a predetermined agenda, so prisoners created their own work. Our focus is on stimulating dialogue, encouraging respect and team-building and helping with conflict resolution and personal transformation."

In 2018 BearFace Theatre, in partnership with Hampshire Cultural Trust, launched a pilot project exploring the idea of self identity. Ten men were invited to take part for 10 weeks, with Kate and Jennifer leading interactive sessions to explore attitudes, thinking and behaviour.

As the weeks went on, improvisation and exploratory games brought participants together. "Learners who were initially full of bravado and walked with a swagger began to leave their egos at the door and open up," says Jennifer. "Men started to encourage each other and praise others' contributions. The group was often loud and full of energy, but there was no aggression. Positive feedback from those who participated and the impact the project had on their behaviour highlighted the value of what we were doing."

With funding this time from The National Lottery Community Fund, BearFace Theatre returned to Winchester Prison the following year.

On week 10 a performance entitled Saving Face, examining reoffending and rehabilitation, was played out in poetry, movement, mime, song and dialogue to an audience of prison officers, the education team, prisoners' families and friends and outside organisations including Hampshire Cultural Trust.

With former participants' experiences encouraging others to sign up, 2019's intake created How You See Me. How You Don't, which explored stereotypes and shed light on prisoners' experiences of incarceration and mental health challenges.





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*The trust they had in us was massive for me. Free from judgement, we all led each other, making our own decisions and controlling our own environment.*

**HMP WINCHESTER PRISONER, 2018**

Again, it was backed by Hampshire Cultural Trust. “Prisoners donned masks for one particularly effective piece of theatre, demonstrating the difference between who they were on the wing and who they were in the privacy of their cell,” says Jennifer. “This time the press covered the performance with write-ups in the Hampshire Chronicle and insidetime, the national newspaper for prisoners.”

Group members in the next programme explored feelings of being stuck in the system and used masks as a metaphor for the way people hide their vulnerabilities from the world. An audience of 60 included friends and family members. Some were moved to tears.

Participation proved so impactful for Lewis (see chapter 17) that he began to write poetry. His work has since been featured by the BBC locally and nationally.

BearFace Theatre continues to work in Winchester Prison, with recent funding including a contribution from Arts Council England. Independent and academic research into its effectiveness is now being used in the Ministry of Justice by its National Research Committee.

“What we offer to prisoners isn’t something we can easily measure on a bar chart,” says Jennifer. “But what we do know is that almost without fail it has given prisoners a sense of purpose and an opportunity to freely express themselves in a safe environment and explore difficult subjects with fresh perspective.

“We know our work has had an impact on participants’ behaviour in prison and has also motivated them to do other courses. The most gratifying aspect is hearing the experiences and voices of prisoners who don’t usually get given the opportunity to tell their stories. It’s inspiring to see how being creative can ignite change.”

**[www.bearfacetheatre.org/prison-projects](http://www.bearfacetheatre.org/prison-projects)**



## CHAPTER

## 12

## My time inside

“It’s the noise that hits you first,” says prisoner Mark, who has been in Winchester Prison for 13 months. “I’d never been in trouble with the law before, so I was really anxious about what prison would be like. On a wing it’s a bit like being in a zoo at times. There’s lots of door slamming and men shouting. That goes on night and day.”

Like all new prisoners during the pandemic, Mark spent the first two weeks away from other prisoners. The only break to the monotony was regular visits from prison officers and 45 minutes a day out of his cell to take a shower, exercise and do admin. “That only gives you enough time to choose one of those activities,” he explains. “At the start there’s lots of forms to fill in and it was sometimes a choice between doing that or having a shower. Meals were delivered to my cell.”

Mark was then moved to a wing. “I was really shocked at first that I would be expected to use the toilet in my cell in front of someone else,” he says. “No one goes to prison expecting it to be nice, but to lose that dignity hit me really hard. Ultimately, you’re living in a very confined space with no privacy at all. When the door closes, you’re left in an empty space with just a bed, a chair, a desk, an in-built TV and a cabinet that you have to make home.”

As a graduate, Mark found the prison education offering limited at the start. “In the early days during the pandemic there wasn’t much choice in the in-cell education packs,” he says. “I worked my way through a lot of subjects just to fill my time. The library service was a big plus. I have now signed up for an Open University course.”

Mark also took on cleaning work. “Cleaning is one of the best jobs you can have at the prison,” he says. “You have to be a trusted pair of hands as you get to move around between wings. Knowing I had something to do each day kept me focused.”

Self-discipline helped too. “Like a lot of men I suffered from depression at the start,” he says. “I was given medication, but facing up to what you’ve done and realising you’ll be in prison to pay for that for some time is hard to deal with.”

He has remained on good terms with fellow prisoners throughout his sentence. “When I first came to the prison I was asked if I smoked,” he says. “When I said that I didn’t, someone said to me, ‘You’ll be all right then’. If you’re a smoker you’re more likely to depend on a regular supply of tobacco or vaping capsules. That makes you an easy target for theft and debt with other prisoners. If you end up in debt you can easily be exploited.”



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*50 per cent of prisoners in HMP Winchester receive no visitors.*

HMP WINCHESTER, 2021

Mark's crime was non-violent, but throughout his sentence he has lived with violent offenders. "It's a real eye-opener when you go to prison and you find out that someone who's just made you a cuppa is inside because they've committed a violent crime," he says.

"In prison everyone is equal. We all share the same living experience here and all look the same. All of us have messed up. All of us are very aware of that."

Addiction and mental health challenges are the biggest issues across the prison, Mark says. "There's a lot of talk about rehabilitation, but you have to want to do that here," he says.

"Some guys with big problems sit around in cells for far too long not doing anything constructive. There is help out there but you have to ask for it and sometimes ask a few times to get it.

Staff shortages make the problem worse. Men get fed up asking for the things they think should be available to them and the time it takes to get access to them. When that frustration bubbles over, their behaviour deteriorates really quickly."

Mark is now on the prison's Westhill unit, which has an open-door system so men can move freely for meals, work and socialising. "Over here the behaviour is pretty good," he says.

"Everyone is focused on getting out of prison and no one wants to mess up their chances of doing that. I've got just a few more weeks to serve and can't wait to give my mum a big hug. She didn't want to visit me while I was here and I understand why. It'll be the first hug I've had in a very, very long time."





## CHAPTER

## 13

Locked up  
in lockdown

Talk to head of residence Steve Bolton at Winchester Prison about the pandemic and it's clear that it had a huge impact on health and wellbeing – not only for prisoners but for officers too.

“At its worst we had almost a third of our staff off sick with Covid,” he says. “It’s testimony to their resilience that we were able to keep the prison going in the most challenging circumstances.”

Steve and his team look after the day-to-day running of the wings. “During the pandemic we had to isolate all new arrivals for 14 days,” he says. “Daily intakes were organised into separate groups from everyone else to minimise contact should one of them test positive for Covid. Times that by 14 and it was a huge operational challenge.”

As the pandemic developed, Covid guidelines came thick and fast from the national Prison and Probation Service, with the prison management team working day and night to implement big changes.

“At the height of the pandemic we were only able to offer most men an hour max out of their cells each day,” says Steve. “We simply didn’t have the hours in the day to operate our usual timetable. Our workshops stopped, education in classrooms stopped.

During a very hot summer, even giving men access to a shower became a challenge.”

Sick prisoners were isolated and cared for by the healthcare team. Some required hospital admission, which also meant 24/7 attendance by prison officers on NHS wards.

“These staff, just like the nurses and doctors around them, worked in full PPE on Covid-positive wards,” says Steve. “At the time a lot of the focus was on the NHS, and rightly so, but prison staff were also exposing themselves to Covid every day.”

Unexpectedly, prisoners’ mental health remained largely robust through the worst of the pandemic. “Part of this was because, for some, being locked down in cells made them feel safer and less able to access illegal drugs or alcohol from others,” says Steve.

“The hardest thing for many was a ban on family visits. We gave men extra money on their in-cell phones to try to keep contact going and started introducing video calls as part of a national trial.”



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*At some points during the pandemic, the vast majority of prisoners nationally were locked up for nearly the whole day with usually no more than half an hour out of their cells.*

CAPTIVE BRIEFING NO. 2, TACKLING THE SPREAD OF CORONAVIRUS IN PRISON,  
PRISON REFORM TRUST, 2020

Vaccination take-up at Winchester Prison proved to be another challenge. “Some of our prisoners view vaccination as a form of authoritarian control and won’t engage simply for that reason,” says Steve. “That made Covid control much more difficult inside the prison, where we also had a back-up of men who were waiting for court cases at a time when the courts had a backlog.

“Like care homes and other places where people live very closely together, a single case of Covid spread very quickly and had massive consequences. Prisoners saw and heard about rules relaxing everywhere outside prison and were frustrated that we were still operating with a limited regime. Every new intake of men brought with it risk for everyone. At one point one fifth of our men tested Covid-positive.”

The pandemic affected operational staff in other ways too. “Prison officers’ duties became focused on preventing Covid and keeping men apart as opposed to facilitating education, social care, work and visits,” Steve says. “We had to prioritise our time looking after the most vulnerable physically and mentally to keep everyone well, and also those who regularly cause problems, to keep the prison safe. At times it felt like the human touch was lacking as the focus was on prioritising operational requirements.”

Their efforts did not go unnoticed, however. “For the first time in my career, prison officers were hailed as ‘hidden heroes’ along with other blue-light services,” says Steve. “Campaigns locally from Winchester Magazine among others saw us receive cakes and sweets from the community, thanking us for our work.

“Like a lot of the public sector, if we’re doing our job well you don’t hear about us. It’s easy to forget that to achieve that there will be people going above and beyond every day. Prison officers constantly put themselves at risk to protect the public from those who have done wrong. We also now face an increased risk of Covid infection too. It went largely unreported that prison staff across the UK weren’t prioritised for vaccines in the same way that other blue-light services were – despite the obvious risks.”

Winchester Prison, like other prisons around the country, is returning to pre-Covid regimes, but it will be a gradual process. “We know that Covid won’t go away,” says Steve. “It’s another challenge that we will stoically get on with and add to the workload.

“With or without Covid, prison officers forge on as they have always done. We work together proactively as a team with dedication to get the job done.”







## CHAPTER

## 14

Those left  
behind

“Only 10 years ago prison families had to queue up outside the gates in all weathers to be searched before visiting time,” says Winchester Prison’s family support service manager Kerry Longhorn. “There was nowhere to get a cup of coffee after a long journey. There wasn’t even anywhere to change a nappy.”

Kerry was working as a strategic manager in Children’s Services for Hampshire County Council when she became aware of the lack of support for prison families. Children in particular had virtually no connection with their fathers other than at visiting times. There was no provision for families at the prison and no formal support for prisoners’ children in school either.

What started as an independent project in Winchester, backed by a small grant from the Department for Education, grew with volunteers and prison backing and became a flagship for the now Spurgeons-run prison family centres, which operate across the UK.

In Winchester the visitor centre is a colourful and welcoming place just inside the prison gates. Every wall is decorated with pictures and poems by dads and kids, full of love and encouragement. “Our pioneering Invisible Walls project started in HMP Winchester in 2011 and works with families

and Probation and Children’s Services to look after prisoners and their families from imprisonment to release,” says Kerry.

“We are here for prisoners and their families and friends who visit them, with a particular focus on children and strengthening family relationships. Spurgeons runs these centres and receives some funding from the Ministry of Justice but otherwise is almost entirely dependent on charitable donations for its prison work.

“Prison visits are important for everyone involved. Our aim is to make them less daunting so that time spent together helps families to reconnect in a positive way. We also offer practical and emotional support to families of prisoners.”

But it’s not just outside the prison that Spurgeons’ support service makes such a difference. The centre also helps fathers inside prison. “We hold regular family days where we bring in toys and activities that prisoners and their families can do together,” says Kerry. “We also offer a programme of parenting and healthy relationships courses and workshops. Since 2016 we’ve worked with hundreds of fathers – and grandfathers – in custody.”



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*Around half of prisoners lose contact with their families. Those who keep in contact are up to six times less likely to reoffend.*

**STORYBOOK DADS 2020 ANNUAL REPORT**

The success of the project has not gone unnoticed. Invisible Walls won praise from Lord Harmer, whose 2017 Ministry of Justice prison review report praised the project and stressed the importance of strengthening prisoners' family ties to prevent reoffending and intergenerational crime.

Purple Visits are another way to connect prisoners with their families. "As well as receiving visits each month inside prison, prisoners are also entitled to one supervised 30-minute 'visit' a month via a secure video link, where they can talk to their families in their own homes," says Kerry.

"Children in particular often interact much more naturally at home than in a prison visiting room. The service is not only useful for prisoners' families who live too far away to visit regularly but also proved invaluable during the pandemic, when visits were heavily restricted."

Restricted visiting during Covid led to a new video diary service – The Golden Thread – for families with a father in custody at HMP Winchester. Prison fathers and their children were able to share experiences through recordings of day-to-day positives which were then exchanged once a month.

"Video is a popular way for prison fathers to communicate with their family," says Kerry. "Our Storybook Dads reading scheme allows fathers to record themselves reading story books for their children, giving them a way to have a bit of special time before bed."

There are other smaller but equally important things that Kerry and her team facilitate. "We can arrange calls with solicitors so dads inside can find out about any legal processes concerning their children. We encourage dads to sign up for prison education so they boost their skill set to support their children. And we often informally pop by for a chat. It's a bit like being an informal aunty sometimes."

The work of Kerry and her team does not go unnoticed by those inside. There are lots of thank-you cards on the walls of the visitor centre. Hers is a role which encourages prisoners to engage with life beyond the walls. "Some 98 per cent of imprisoned dads said that being involved with the project improved and enriched their relationship with their child," she says. "There's nothing more positive for me than knowing that we are creating positive outcomes for families and in some cases improving and solidifying those relationships through our work."

**[www.spurgeons.org](http://www.spurgeons.org)**

DOING TIME





## CHAPTER

## 15

## A prison officer's story

When Sophie Lane applied to be a prison officer, following a degree in psychology, she knew it wouldn't be easy. "Although some of my friends questioned my career choice, my family were all behind me," she says. "They knew that I had always been able to handle myself. Being able to do that – in any situation – is a really important part of the job."

Three months of intensive training followed at HMPS College Newbold Revel in Warwickshire. "It was tough physically as well as mentally," says Sophie. "On one drill, we were kitted out with full personal protection gear including helmets and shields and then told to run circuits. There were exams at the end of the course and lots of physical tests."

Sophie then spent four weeks shadowing officers on A Wing at Winchester Prison before she was given a set of cell keys. "I remember being struck then with the responsibility I had," she says.

"Before the pandemic, the prison regime was the same every day. We'd unlock prisoners for medication, then take them to education, their cleaning duties or the prison workshops. We'd then oversee association periods, admin and meal times before being responsible for evening lockdown."

"Within that time there were inevitably big challenges. As a prison officer you are a social worker one moment and restraining someone violent the next. As a woman I've found there is a certain amount of respect for us from the prisoners and it's less likely that we are assaulted. But it does happen."

Being female is not easy in other ways, however. "Respect is sometimes lacking in the way it's there for male prison officers," says Sophie. "We're diminished by prisoners sometimes on the basis of our sexuality, which we challenge daily. That said, it's often the female prison officers that have particular strengths at diffusing situations and talking men down."

Working as a team is vital for officers on the wings. "The support of the other prison officers becomes something you appreciate straightaway," says Sophie. "I know that any one of them would step in at any time if I needed them. Sometimes a male colleague will offer to take over if I'm dealing with a particularly challenging restraint after a violent incident, just because he has more strength, but generally I deal with the same physical demands as they do."

Keeping prisoners apart during the pandemic led to a much more restrictive regime, which everyone found difficult.





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*In 2020, there were 7,979 assaults on prison officers nationally (equating to almost 23 assaults a day), an increase of more than 250 per cent over 2000. And while prisoner numbers have increased, the number of officers has decreased by about 12 per cent.*

**SAFETY IN CUSTODY QUARTERLY UPDATE, MINISTRY OF JUSTICE, MARCH 2021**

“Bearing in mind that many of our prisoners have poor mental health, locking them in cells for most of the day, particularly during a hot summer, made tensions rise,” says Sophie.

“It was tough at times to implement regimes which we felt, at ground level, had come from senior civil servants who were very far removed from the day-to-day realities of prison life. There have been many occasions when I’ve been pulled away from supporting a prisoner because I’ve been needed to fulfil an operational task that has a higher priority.”

Dealing with extremes of behaviour from prisoners also remains a challenge. “I think I’ve seen almost everything, so very little shocks me now,” says Sophie. “At its worst, I’ve dealt with men who have covered themselves and their cells with blood after self-harming.

“I’ve been punched in the face and had to carry on with the rest of my shift. I’ve witnessed cases when cell walls have been covered in excrement in protest or as a means for a prisoner to get moved.

“I’ve always been the sort of person who thrives on adrenalin, but prison officers need to be constantly assessing risk to respond as quickly as we do. I find myself doing that even when I’m away from the prison sometimes.”

Seeing the same faces return to the wings is always disappointing. “We get assigned a caseload of prisoners to work with,” Sophie says. “You can see someone leave prison feeling you’ve given them a lot of support and then see them back again just a few weeks – or sometimes even days – later.

“I tell them when I’m disappointed in them. For some of them I’m the only one that they feel cares and wants them to do better in life.”

She adds, “The people who really keep me going inside are my fellow officers. Unless you’ve been a prison officer you can’t even begin to imagine how important the support is that we give to each other, emotionally, physically and on a practical level too.

“We’re there to protect each other as well as the prisoners, and that means putting a lot of trust in someone else. I think my fellow officers probably know me almost as well as my family does.”



1 M PRISON  
RIMSEY ROAD  
WINCHESTER  
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# CHAPTER 16 Moving on

A man's capacity to change – that's what Allan Appleby believes in. As senior probation officer and head of offender management delivery at Winchester Prison, giving men hope for a more positive future begins from the day they are remanded into custody. "Typically, a man will serve half of his custodial sentence in prison," says Allan. "Licence under probation supervision allows prisoners to serve time out of prison in the community in a restricted way for the remainder of that sentence, and that will hopefully help them move on."

Probation staff work within the court system before a man is sentenced; Allan's team meets with prisoners within 48 hours of the start of their custodial sentence. Probation support continues right the way through the custodial journey to release. "Our role is to monitor the risk a man might pose to others and himself both in prison and on release, and to manage that risk accordingly to give him the best chance of reforming," Allan says.

"In an initial assessment, we identify factors that may lead him to reoffend and the risk posed. We will then facilitate ways for him to receive training and education, and medical care if needed for addiction, to help him stand the best chance of a new life on the outside."

Most of the men at Winchester Prison serve fewer than three months inside. "That's a very short time to try to make big changes," says Allan. "It's much easier to support men who have been returned to Winchester to see out the last 12 months or so of longer sentences."

Following an assessment with a parole board, which takes into account in-prison behaviour and recommendations from the probation team, prisoners who have committed more serious crimes typically leave prison on licence, with licence conditions that are bespoke to them.

"These may include a curfew, banned contact with named individuals or restrictions on the sort of work they can undertake or areas they can frequent," says Allan. "Regular meetings with community offender managers will also be a requirement, as well as home visits. Ongoing treatment for addictions like drugs or alcohol may also be agreed terms, or study for a work-based qualification.

"Some prisoners opt to serve their whole sentence rather than take early release so they can walk away from their past without further official contact from anyone."





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*Half of those surveyed in 2016 said they would not consider employing an ex-offender.*

SUPPORT FOR EX-OFFENDERS, YOUNG GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT FOR WORK AND PENSIONS SURVEY, 2016

In other circumstances, men who have served all their sentence in prison on remand, perhaps following lengthy legal proceedings or following a not guilty verdict, are free to leave without restriction or are made subject to a community sentence.

Returning to society is not easy. “More of the offenders we work with on short sentences return to prison than don’t,” says Allan. “Finding housing is difficult. Finding employment is even more difficult. The prison discharge grant – handed to adult inmates once they leave – is around £76. Most benefits do not kick in straightaway.” The temptation to commit further crime is often too great. “Custody for many is only a deterrent until they have spent time inside,” he adds.

Failure to comply with the terms of a licence can see a man brought back to prison to serve the remainder of his sentence. Recall to prison is then set at 14 days or 28 days if the original sentence was not lengthy. In more serious circumstances a man will return to prison until the end of his sentence unless a parole board or the Secretary of State for Justice make a decision to further release him.

“It’s not unheard of for a man to apologise to us for messing up again,” says Allan. “We continue without judgement to give him the best chance on his next release.”

For other men, being given the chance to start again ends well. “For those who have gained our trust, our Release On Temporary Licence scheme provides work in the community while they are still inside, often leading to employment on release,” Allan says. “Some men work outside the prison during the day and then return to prison each evening. Others work within prison doing maintenance outside the walls but within the grounds, which also helps when it comes to assessing their suitability for release.”

Every now and again Allan will meet someone out on the street who he and his team have helped move on. “It’s hugely rewarding when someone you’ve supported has good news to share,” he says. “There are disappointments. But we move on. I’ve always said I’ll continue to work until I don’t enjoy what I do each day. I still wake up wanting to do more.”

DOING TIME



## CHAPTER

## 17

Lives turned  
around

"I've finally found peace in my heart," says Lewis, 40, who turned his life around in Winchester Prison. "It was when people believed in me and I started to believe in myself," he says.

Lewis had a difficult home life. "My parents split up and I went to live with my dad," he says. "I was the sort of kid that always seemed to be in trouble. By the time I was in my teens I was regularly shoplifting and doing drugs."

Held at a police station at 13 for yet another offence, Lewis found that neither his dad nor anyone else from his family was prepared to take responsibility for him.

"I remember sitting in my room in my first children's home in floods of tears, feeling so alone," he says. "But soon the tears turned to anger. I vowed to myself that no one would ever tell me what to do ever again.

"Being the master of my own destiny at 13 seemed exciting at first. It was also very frightening. I believed I could do what I wanted, when I wanted, and that no one could tell me otherwise. I had no boundaries."

His first prison sentence saw him sent to a young offenders' institution at 15. And for the following 20 years he was in and out of prisons all over the country.

"A mantra I'd repeat daily was 'I don't care'. No matter how bad it got. Doing crime for drugs became part of my life. I used drugs to escape from how I was feeling, and drugs eventually brought me to my knees"

In 2019, at the start of yet another sentence, Lewis was broken physically. He was painfully thin, drug-dependent and at rock bottom. "I came to the realisation that I couldn't live like this anymore," he says. "I got on my knees and begged God for help."

At Winchester Prison he was helped not only by the substance misuse team but also by the mental health unit, who set up sessions with a psychologist. As he began to feel better, he signed up for other support.

"The Sycamore Tree victim awareness course was a turning point for me," he says.

"I had always thought that I was the victim, so how on earth could I have any victims? Realising how much I'd hurt other people made me change my outlook.



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*The prison system is like a river. The wider it gets, the faster it flows – and the harder it becomes to swim against the tide.*

OUR VISION, HOWARD LEAGUE FOR PRISON REFORM, 2021

“I became a peer supporter for the substance misuse team, I was given trust and responsibility and I began to feel some self-worth. Helping others stopped me thinking about myself. I made a decision that I was going to be a walking advert for recovery within the prison. If I could do it, anyone could. I began to build a clear picture in my mind of the person I wanted to become.”

Exploring the Christian faith and inspired by the chaplaincy team, Lewis found peace in prayer and contemplation. “I started praying each day for myself and the guys around me, and my connection with God grew,” he says. “I didn’t need to label myself as an addict or a criminal anymore. I was Lewis, a guy who’d had a difficult start in life. I found that I could tolerate my emotions if I gave myself a chance to sit with them.

“There are some truly amazing, selfless people in this world and I certainly found some of them at Winchester Prison. Angela Wiseman in education spurred me on, celebrating my successes in a way that hadn’t ever happened to me before. The mental health team supported me at every step and the chaplaincy were there for lots of talking about Christianity.”

Working with BearFace Theatre on a creative workshop, Lewis was asked to perform in front of prisoners, officers and families. “I had always written poetry and lyrics as an emotional outlet and this gave me the opportunity to tap back into that,” he says.

“I started to write longer pieces, basing my poetry on my life experiences. I now have a dedicated YouTube channel, Recovery Discovery Spoken Word, and have been interviewed by the BBC and on prison radio about my work.”

Lewis is now out of prison and has set up a landscaping business. He’s teetotal and drug-free and has been supported by his local church.

“I have found that life is about progress, not perfection,” he says. “If and when issues arise, and invariably they do, I tap into my support network and ask for help. I am trying my hardest, with the help of God, to be the best version of myself. My life has started again. And I’m really proud of how far I’ve come.”





## CHAPTER

## 18

## The future

**THE PRISON POPULATION IS INCREASING...**

The prison population has risen by 70 per cent in the last 30 years and is projected to increase by another 20 per cent to 98,700 by September 2026<sup>16</sup>.

More than 2.5 times as many people were sentenced to ten years or more in 2018 than in 2006<sup>17</sup>.

Judges are imposing longer tariff periods. The average minimum term imposed for murder rose from 12.5 years in 2003 to 21.3 years in 2016<sup>18</sup>.

**HIGH NUMBERS OF PRISONERS ARE REOFFENDING...**

Re-offending rates remain high (48 per cent)<sup>19</sup>.

**MENTAL HEALTH PROVISION IS BECOMING MORE DEMANDING...**

Dementia is a growing problem within prisons. The fastest growth in the number of prisoners has been among prisoners aged over 50<sup>20</sup>.

NHS England estimates that 37 per cent of its spend on adult healthcare in prisons is on mental health and substance abuse, which is more than twice the proportion that is being spent within the NHS budget as a whole<sup>20</sup>.

The Institute of Psychiatry estimates that over half of prisoners have common mental disorders, including depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and anxiety<sup>20</sup>.

**LEVELS OF VIOLENCE ARE HIGH...**

Winchester has one of the highest rates of prisoner-on-prisoner assault<sup>21</sup>.

Prisoner assaults on staff have reduced somewhat since last year (2019) but are still high compared with many other prisons<sup>21</sup>.

**THE FABRIC OF WINCHESTER PRISON IS IN SOME AREAS, UNFIT FOR PURPOSE...**

The dated construction and fabric of the prison's buildings make it intrinsically unsafe, having already contributed to one major incident<sup>21</sup>.

*The prison service faces many challenges over the next few years.*



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Minute by minute  
Hour by hour  
Day by day  
Year by year  
I'm still here.

Counting the bricks on the wall  
Lying on my bed, staring at the door  
Wishing I had made different choices  
Wishing for so much more  
I'm still here.

Making a call  
Waiting for a letter  
In the vain hope, I will feel better  
Lying on my bed to escape from my head  
I'm still here.

Smiles, handshakes all the way  
At last, today is my last day  
On my way to reception  
Time at last for reflection  
I'm still here.

Walking through the gate  
My family in a car  
A distance to travel – but not too far  
Home at last  
I'm no longer here.

WINCHESTER PRISON POETRY



Doing Time tells the story of 175 years of Winchester Prison, shedding light on its history and revealing how changing attitudes towards incarceration have led to a focus on rehabilitation and reform.

It provides an overview of the many individuals who make up Winchester Prison – from teachers and prison officers to the prisoners themselves. Their stories have been written as they have been told – without agenda.

They reveal the challenges of supporting prisoners with complex needs and the frustrations of working in a system where reoffending is far too common. But they also demonstrate the positive changes that can be made by those who want to turn their lives around.

It is testimony to the dedication of the people who work behind these walls that there are so many inspirational stories to be told.



Supported by Hampshire Cultural Trust.