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# *Actor-Directors: The Working Lives of Prison Governors*

HILARY MARY FAULKNER

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## **Abstract**

Hilary Faulkner – Actor-Directors: The Working Lives of Prison Governors

Prison Governors are both actors and directors within the Prison Service. They fulfil key roles at the boundaries of individual prisons and the wider contexts: organisational, social and political, within which prisons function. In this thesis I study aspects of the working lives of nine Governing Governors of public sector prisons in England and Wales from a performative, role-playing perspective. In addition to this I utilise two recently developed models to provide frameworks for examining two key areas of Governors' roles: those of leadership and of well-being.

I use literary collage and imaginative writing to present and interpret interview material together with self interviews and reflection on my experiences as a Ph.D. researcher, enabling me to show how my research developed and how I have developed as a researcher.

In concluding my thesis I make a number of recommendations in the areas of leadership learning, well-being, further research and research methodology.

**Actor-Directors: The Working Lives of Prison  
Governors**

Ph.D. Thesis

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University of Durham

2010/11

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## **Introduction**

Since I first began to work on this research and the written thesis by which I will present it, or some of it, I have thought of it as either a patchwork or a collage, pieces pieced together to make a functional and pleasing whole. But as I write this introduction another image also seems appropriate - that it is a three-stranded plait. The first and most important of these is that it is a qualitative, interview based study of the working lives of a group of Governing Governors of prisons in England and Wales. The second is that it is the story of my time as an ESRC funded research student at Durham University. Third it is the story of a developing methodology.

The thesis is similarly presented in three strands, not plaited together though. The first of these provides an introduction and context for the research. In this section I give some background information and discussion to help in understanding and imagining the context in which this research takes place. There are three parts to this.

The first of these is a brief history of imprisonment in England and Wales covering the developments of penological theory and attitudes to the use of imprisonment and the developing role of Prison Governors. The second looks at more recent times, examining imprisonment under the Blair and Brown "New Labour" governments from 1997 to the present. The third considers recent writing and research on Prison Governors. Reading these should give a basic background knowledge of the situation in which Governing Governors work and the principal issues and debates which affect that working situation.

The second part of the thesis is about the research process. To borrow from Kenneth Burke's dramatic pentad (1969), it is about who, did what, for what reason, in what way, and in what context? And then having done 'it', in my case interviewing a group of Governors about their working lives, how did I manage the material, how did I approach developing an understanding of it, how do I present it and what can it tell us?

To answer the question 'who?' first. I am a middle-aged woman with a working background in learning disability nursing and a mixed academic

provenance, having studied in the early 1980s for a degree in sociology and psychology after finishing my nursing training. After a few years back working for the NHS I completed a Masters degree in Community Care for people with learning disabilities and then after a short break began a Ph.D. working on developing a method of relaxation for non-communicating learning disabled people. I gave this up after we relocated to another part of the country and then spent several years as a full-time mother. When my son was ten and I had acquired considerable skill in locating very small pieces of Lego along with a broad knowledge of entomology I returned to study as an Open University humanities student. After my foundation year I took courses in English literature, religious history and finally, because I was by this time working for the Prison Governors' Association (PGA), in criminology. After two years funding for this post was withdrawn and I needed to find something else. I had trained in proofreading and started training as an indexer prior to starting work for the PGA and so I took up my training again and advertised for work. Quite serendipitously I saw an advert for Ph.D. research students at Durham University and as I had always hoped to study for a Ph.D. I decided to apply. I was fortunate to be successful in my application and in securing funding from the ESRC, conditional on my completing a methods course. I therefore became a full time Masters student at Durham in 2004 and following successful completion of a Masters in research methods in Social Policy (though my degree certificate says social work!) began work on this Ph.D.

What did I do? Well, apart from the obvious – reading a lot and making many notes, talking to supervisors, fellow postgrads, friends, colleagues and family – I interviewed nine Governing Governors of prisons in England and Wales from one to four times.

How and why did I do it? These two questions are too closely linked for me to answer them separately without much repetition, so I will consider them together. Ignoring the obvious overall answer that I did it because I wanted to study for a Ph.D. – why did I choose this area of research and why did I choose the research approach I finally opted for?

Looking at the first of these linked questions – why did I choose this area of research? After all, it is quite different from my first foray into postgraduate study. I had very much enjoyed working for the PGA and had developed an interest in the working experiences of Governors, and when I saw the advertisement for Durham it was obvious to me that I could apply to do research relating to Governors and I wrote the email that started off the process without a great deal of thought.

Choosing the research approach that I finally adopted – or that slowly evolved as I worked – took a lot more thought. I knew I wanted to adopt a qualitative approach. For me this is to do with honesty and respect for individual experience as well as what you can find out using different research methods. A quantitative approach will tell you how many sweets there are in a jar and about colour and size and other observable factors, but it will not tell you what they taste like. Interviewing was the obvious approach for me. I had interviewed before and felt reasonably confident and comfortable with it; I liked the flexibility that a minimal interview structure could offer and I was comfortably certain that with an articulate group of people like Governing Governors I would not struggle to get responses within a fairly unstructured framework. I wanted to meet with each Governor more than once so that there was an opportunity to revisit topics, to work within the context of changes in the Prison Service and changes for the Governors as they became more experienced and dealt with new situations. Meeting more than once also meant that as well as having a longitudinal element the research could also have a latitudinal dimension in that I could refer between Governors so that if one made a comment about, say, industrial relations I could then raise that with others in the research group and so create a kind of mediated conversation.

Deciding how to deal with the material I collected was a yet more complex process. I had attended a two day workshop on using Nvivo software and found it interesting to use. However, I was struck by how similar it was in many ways to indexing, and I found the indexing software that I had already begun using (Sky) much easier to use and more user friendly. And the output, an index, is something that is easy to look at and understand,

whereas I often find diagrammatic representations of information off-putting and difficult. So it seemed obvious to make some use of indexing in managing and looking at my interviews. I describe and discuss how I used indexing later in the thesis.

When I first began to draft the material that forms the middle section of the thesis I had read a number of interview-based studies. I found them frustrating because there seemed to be very little of the interviewees in them. Their words were used to support the ideas of the researcher/author and seemed secondary to these. I felt that this was an imbalance and often resulted in research that was less interesting than it might have been. Although I had my own ideas I did not want these to dominate the research but to develop from it in a manner similar to grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1996; Glaser, 2002)

I did, however, start my own writing using a similar approach. That seemed to be how it was done, and I was learning the rules of the game. So, I had interviews, some transcribed in full, most with detailed notes, all indexed so that I could pick out what seemed to be key themes, and I began to write my thoughts around those themes, supporting them, rather like an English literature essay, with selected quotes from the Governors.

I came to feel more and more uncomfortable with this approach as it seemed to mute the voices of the Governors whose words and ideas are the key to my research. It also seemed inappropriate to the drama based ideas that had always underpinned my thoughts.

Gradually, and influenced by reading books on organisational research, I was able to move away from this approach and to look at other ways of presenting conversational data and my thoughts about it. I decided that I wanted to bring the Governors' words to the fore and to give anyone reading this thesis the opportunity to read at least some of them and form their own ideas and opinions before telling them what I thought. In order to do this I adopted an approach which embodies the patchwork metaphor that, as I have already mentioned, has always been part of my own mental image of this work. It is also similar to what Denzin (2001), drawing on the

writing of Annie Dillard (1982), calls literary collage. Cutting things up and reassembling them to form a coherent, functional and pleasing new item.

However I chose to approach using the conversational material I collected I knew I was going to have to edit it in some way. I could not present some 800 pages of unedited transcript and notes in a Ph.D. I therefore decided, after much thought and reading about possible approaches, that I would take the conversational material I had collected, pick out certain subjects that seemed to be particularly important, and collect together material on these. Then, rather than drawing on it for supportive quotes, I would assemble it into 'scenes' involving all of the Governors who had spoken on that topic. In this way I can bring out the Governor's voices and the areas where they agreed or disagreed or had similar or dissimilar experiences. Thus in this middle section of the thesis there are nine scenes which were constructed from the conversational material by printing out all the extracts I had on particular topics; cutting up the printouts and then piecing a selection together to form scenes in which several Governors talk about a topic.

The fifth element of Burke's (1969) pentad requires looking at context. This question can be answered in several ways for this research. The research was undertaken in the context of a Ph.D. which in turn took place mainly in the context of Durham University and my home, but also includes several trips abroad during which I worked on the thesis, bus and train rides, walks with my dog, trips to the pub and lunches with friends and colleagues. It was undertaken in the context of the Criminal Justice system of England and Wales and within that system it took place within nine prisons, and in the offices of nine Governing Governors. There are also political and social elements to the context of the research. The political elements are discussed in some detail in the section on New Labour. Social elements, including issues such as the place of imprisonment in society are discussed in that section and in the section on the history of imprisonment. There is also a small scale social element in that each meeting was a social event that formed part of the developing relationships between me and the Governors.

Moving on from Burke's pentad, which has provided a useful way of positioning my thesis; I need to look at how I am fulfilling the expectations and requirements of Ph.D. research. It rapidly becomes apparent when one begins to look at research into Prison Governors that there is very little of it. Despite their key role in the Criminal Justice system Governors have so far received little scholarly attention. Recent research is discussed in the section devoted to that topic. This research makes a contribution towards remedying that situation. As the majority of writing about Governors, whether descriptive or more analytical, has come from people who either are or have been Governors this study adds to the slowly growing literature as the first in-depth study of the working lives of Governors carried out by an outsider.

In addition to this new perspective it also represents some methodological innovations within this field in that the way I approached the interviews – using both longitudinal and latitudinal approaches – and the way I have dealt with the conversational material I collected represent an original approach both in my organisation and examination and in using two recent texts as part of my framework for analysis. The first of these is Steve Kempster's (2009) text on leadership learning, and the second, which forms an important part of my approach to the interview material, is Brun and Cooper's (2009) 'missing pieces' model of employee well-being.

The final part of the thesis aims to provide a balanced closure for the work. In this section I review the various aspects of my research and my experience as a Ph.D. researcher and attempt to evaluate both the research and the learning experience drawing my conclusions and making suggestions about matters that arise within the research study and the process and experience of doing the research.

To recap on the overall structure of the thesis, I begin with three background chapters which give information and context against which to set the research. These look at, in turn, the history of imprisonment, the use of imprisonment under the Blair and Brown governments and at recent research and writing on Prison Governors.

From this I move into the actual research area of the work. In keeping with the ideas of performance which underlie my work this is presented in a performative text. It begins with a prologue to introduce the material, followed by a cast list and some information about the players. I follow this with a transcript of an interview with myself which gives more in-depth information about aspects of the project, I then comment on this interview and elaborate on some of the answers I gave.

After this I present material from the interviews with Governors. This is presented in nine themed scenes:

Ambition and casting – joining the Prison Service

Rehearsals – training and development

First nights and stage fright – becoming a Governing Governor

Acting the part – time management

The director's cut – autonomy and accountability

Changing the scenery – National Offender Management Service (NOMS), Ministry of Justice

Losing the plot – the prison officers' strike

How long to run? – staying in post

Supporting players

Interspersed with these are a number of longer individual sections from the recorded material, soliloquies covering different aspects of working within the Prison Service. In two of the selections I put together longer extracts from two or three Governors who have each spoken at some length about a topic. Taking this approach fitted better with the material I had gathered than the collage method I have used for most of the scenes.

Each of these scenes and soliloquies is followed by my commentary in which I discuss what the Governors have said in the context of appropriate elements of the three theoretical approaches which I found useful in helping me to look at the interviews.

In the final section I interview myself again as a way of reflecting on the research. I then draw my conclusions and raise issues that stem from the research and make recommendations relating both to the working lives of the Governors and the process of researching for this project.

# **A brief history of imprisonment**

## **Introduction**

One of the ideas that I brought with me at the very start of the research described and discussed in this thesis is that Prison Governors experience certain tensions which are inherent in their role. In this chapter I shall consider how these tensions have arisen in part through the development of the Prison Service and the theoretical and policy issues which have informed that development. In examining this I shall keep in mind Muncie's (2002) dual caveats that there is no single history of imprisonment, and that history should not be seen as running in linear fashion from one ideological viewpoint to the next. Rather, different attitudes to the purpose of imprisonment, latterly principally reformatory, rehabilitative and repressive, have co-existed in varying degrees of unease at different times in prison history with each assuming dominance at different times. Thus the 'role and purpose of the prison is the subject of ongoing dispute and controversy.' (Muncie, 2002: 158) Prison Governors are charged with managing secure, humanitarian establishments in this atmosphere of dispute and controversy.

Bryans and Wilson (2000) suggest that the 1877 Prison Act should be seen as laying the foundation for the modern Prison Service. However, certain important features of the Prison Service as it exists today appeared before this date. Muncie (2002: 161) points to the establishment of Houses of Correction in the sixteenth century, with an emphasis on individual reformation, as the first example of modern imprisonment. Ruggles-Brise (1921: 24) dates the modern Prison Service from the 1778 Prison Act, before commenting 'a long, dismal history of ill-considered administration was destined to intervene before the principles of penal science, as now understood, obtained expression.' An attempt was made to adopt 'corrections' as the catch-all term for prisons and Probation in the UK with the appointment, in March 2003, of Martin Narey as the first Commissioner for Corrections, but this has failed to catch on in general usage. This follows the North American example, where corrections has long been the term in common usage. The term 'House of Correction' had been abolished

in Great Britain in 1805 and 'local prison' adopted as the generic term (Ruggles-Brise, 1921: 59). May (1979) suggests that an underlying theme of nineteenth century penal history is the gradual extension of the role of central government in prison administration; this has continued to the present. As we shall see later in the thesis, the role of government and of party politics in the Prison Service has been a source of both debate and conflict over time and has been cited by Prison Governors as a major problem in the management of prisons.

### **The development of prisons: ninth to nineteenth centuries**

There have been prisons in England and Wales since the ninth century; however their mode of use has changed over time and with this their place in the delivery of criminal justice and in social perceptions. Roberts and Hough (2002: 5) write of the 'hegemony of imprisonment', suggesting that 'members of the public associate crime with punishment, and punishment with prison.' Prisons are uniquely visible to the public, and the significance of imprisonment is maintained by news and creative media and by politicians. Roberts and Hough also argue that there exists a 'deep-seated attachment to punishment as a response to wrongdoing.' Camp (1974: 10) describes prisons as 'the pivot of our penal system' and this viewpoint endures; prisons have a cultural image built of news and creative media representations that people can relate to, however inaccurate it may be. The current Labour government has at times, as we shall see later, attempted to address this cultural emphasis on custodial punishment by making non-custodial responses to offending more visible and improving public trust in them.

Early prisons were used for the detention of individuals awaiting trial; the implementation of some other sentence such as transportation or execution; or for the incarceration of debtors, who, by the nineteenth century, accounted for a major part of those imprisoned, as portrayed in Charles Dickens' *Little Dorrit*. Convicted criminals were not sentenced to prison as punishment per se; custody and coercion were the principal purposes of the early prisons. (Muncie, 2002: 159) Transportation declined in availability, following firstly the American War of Independence in 1776 and later the ending of transportation to Australia in 1868, by which time it was deemed

that Australia had sufficient manpower that it no longer needed convict labour (Australian Government, undated). Use of execution also declined, perhaps because of the desire of an 'enlightened' and progressive industrial society to distance itself from the barbaric practices of the past. Alternative means of punishing more serious offenders were needed – from this developed the use of prison as a means of punishment in its own right, rather than as a system of holding individuals pending other action. Penal servitude was introduced as a substitute for transportation in 1853 (Ruggles-Brise, 1921: 23) and by the 1870s prisons had been established as the 'normal' form of punishment (Muncie, 2002: 182)

Traditional 'Whig' histories of imprisonment (Muncie, 2002) see the late eighteenth century as a period of humanitarian reform, inspired by figureheads such as John Howard and Elizabeth Fry and the work of Cesare Beccaria whose *On Crimes and Punishments*, originally published in 1764, argues that punishment is a necessity for the maintenance of social order and that 'Punishments that exceed what is necessary for the protection of the deposit of public security are by their very nature unjust' (Beccaria, reprinted in McLaughlin et al, 2003: 16). Beccaria makes an early case for proportionality inspired by his profound objection to capital punishment, to which he saw prison as an alternative (Morris, 1974). Beccaria is seen as the founder of the classical school of criminology which emphasised the rationality of human behaviour and viewed criminals as being in control of their actions. Classical theorists stressed the deterrent role of judicial punishment – rational beings will not act in a manner which will bring unpleasant consequences. Beccaria placed his theory in the context of a social contract and of fundamental human rights. He believed that criminals could be 'requalified' as members of society, through serving a just penalty. This is an interesting concept to reconsider in present day circumstances; to some extent it is echoed by interest in the reintegrative possibilities of restorative justice (Braithwaite, 1989), but one also has to wonder how it ties in with the obligation to disclose previous offences in certain situations and with the 'name and shame' approach to, particularly young, offenders that has been adopted by some local authorities (Byrne, 2004; Community Care, 2005; Howard League 2005).

Jeremy Bentham was influenced by Beccaria but diverged from Beccaria's stance in developing his utilitarian philosophy which defined moral actions as those which led to the greatest good for the greatest number. Bentham disagreed with Beccaria's view of the rationality of criminals, and was dismissive of Beccaria's ideas of social contract and human rights (Cavadino and Dignan 2002: 48). Bentham designed the panopticon, a prison designed to 'grind rogues honest' through productive work (Bentham, quoted in Muncie, 2002: 168) with emphasis being placed on both deterrent and rehabilitative functions of imprisonment. Bentham's view of criminals as having limited rationality and responsibility would seem to place them alongside the mentally ill and learning disabled and was perhaps a precursor of the development of the treatment model of incarceration, discussed below. Bentham's view allowed for the introduction into sentencing practice of mitigating circumstances, it would be the individual who was sentenced, not solely the offence.

The panopticon was never built, although Bentham's design was adapted for the building of Millbank penitentiary. The virtues of hard work and religious observance were seen as key to the reformation of offenders, a view that led to the passing of the Penitentiary Act in 1779, and the opening of Millbank as the first national penitentiary early in the nineteenth century (there is some disagreement amongst historians as to the actual date of its opening). Gloucester was the first local penitentiary, opening in 1789, and was followed in the ensuing years by several others, including Pentonville where a monastic system of solitude and hard labour was enforced. This reformist emphasis was to decline with the passing of the 1865 and 1877 Prison Acts, which together shifted the emphasis to deterrence and uniformity in the treatment of prisoners.

Millbank together with the prison ships, known as hulks, described in Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*, comprised the national Prison Service until the 1877 Act, with local services being administered by local justices. All convicts sentenced to transportation were sent to Millbank for a three month period prior to execution of their sentence (www.victorianlondon.org, undated). Earlier attempts had been made to

develop some kind of national Prison Service. In the twelfth century Henry II tried to set up a national network of County Gaols and this did develop gradually although these were locally administered. Government control over its areas of responsibility regarding prisons was formalised with the establishment of the Convict Service in 1850. At this time prisons remained essentially local businesses largely run for profit by the gaolers – precursors of Governors – who charged inmates for food and shelter.

The 1877 Act reflected a pattern, seen elsewhere in mid-Victorian England such as in the regulation of working hours and conditions with the introduction of the Factory Inspectorate, of greater centralisation of those facilities and processes which we now group under the general heading of ‘Social Policy’. For prisons this was expressed in a shift of responsibility from local justices to the Home Secretary, with a board of Prison Commissioners overseeing the running of local prisons (Ruggles-Brise, 1921). This can be seen as a first step towards a single Prison Service, but it was not until the Prisons Act of 1898 that local and convict prisons came under the auspices of a single board (Gaskell, 1997). For the prisoners themselves, and their experience of imprisonment, the Act made ‘no fundamental changes’ (Neale, quoted in Gaskell, 1997: 14). The enacting of the 1877 Act did, however, result in the immediate closure of 38 local prisons with another 19 closing during the following ten years (Camp, 1974).

Bryans and Wilson (2000) suggest that the 1877 Act emphasised deterrence and punishment over rehabilitation – a move away from the overtly reformatory agenda of the early penitentiary movement, however this process had, as described above, already started with the 1865 Act. This emphasis was symbolised by the appointment in 1865 of Sir Edmund du Cane as the first chair of the Prison Commission. His task was to implement the twin objectives of the Act: economy in the use of resources and uniformity in the treatment of prisoners (May, 1979; Muncie, 2002). Camp (1974) refers to du Cane’s concern with statistics, a concern which would not be out of place with the modern Prison Service, although the statistics available now, and the methods for examining and utilising them, are far

more sophisticated than anything du Cane could have dreamt of. The prison system emphasised the need to avoid the cross-contamination of inmates, with some prison theorists promoting the idea of silent association and some favouring total separation. (See Foucault, 1977, for a description and discussion of different models of imprisonment at this time.)

During du Cane's period as chair the local and convict prison services remained separate although he did bring the two more into line by such measures as the introduction of hierarchical staffing structures in local prisons. Bryans and Wilson (2000) and Muncie (2002) report that du Cane was criticised for failing to address the problems associated with short sentence prisoners and for high levels of reoffending amongst released prisoners – issues which remain current in the Prison Service.

Du Cane was succeeded as chair in 1895 by Sir Evelyn Ruggles-Brise who defined the purpose of imprisonment as 'the humanisation of the individual'. This suggests a view that prisoners were somehow not human, whether they were seen as sub-human, as suggested by the phrenological studies of Lombroso and the developing eugenics movement or as 'different' is unclear. Either way they are seen as distinct from the law-abiding populace.

Lombroso founded the positivist school of criminology which, as its name suggests, encompassed the belief that 'crime is caused by factors and processes which can be discovered by scientific investigation' (Cavadino and Dignan, 2002: 49). This idea of causative factors encompasses notions of determinism which also led positivist criminologists to believe that, by uncovering those causative factors, it should be possible to predict who is likely to offend, or reoffend. That is, to carry out risk analysis. This viewpoint led to an increased role for experts such as doctors and psychologists within penal systems. Because of this emphasis on causative factors positivism was sceptical about the deterrent function of imprisonment, stressing instead incapacitation and reform as functions of, and justifications for, imprisonment. It also tended to reject ideas of proportionality and due process as criminals were seen as requiring individualised treatment programmes aimed at rehabilitation and through

this at lowering risk. As we shall see, positivism has some echoes in current New Labour approaches to offending.

Ruggles-Brise took up the chair of the Prison Commission in the year following the publication of the 1894 report of the Gladstone Committee. This report gave precedence to the reformatory aspect of imprisonment, together with retribution and deterrence. This shared emphasis on three facets of imprisonment represented a new approach to the treatment of convicted criminals. It also introduced a source of tension into the working lives of those employed in prisons as they tried to reconcile these three aims. Ruggles-Brise was, later in his career, criticised for conditions in prisons following World War I, partly as a result of objections to the imprisonment of conscientious objectors and to the generally undifferentiated conditions under which prisoners served their sentences:

...the criminal, feeble minded, drunken, the early dement, the paranoiac and the senile, the crippled and the young offender, all gathered together under the one prison system.

(Dr Mary Gordon, Inspector of Women's Prisons, 1907–22, quoted in Camp, 1974: 76)

The Gladstone Committee argued that the Prison Commission had failed to pay attention to 'the moral as well as the legal responsibility of the prison authorities' (quoted in May, 1979, p11). As a result of this evaluation the report cited the need for recognition of individual needs which was linked to a better system for classifying prisoners together with more productive work to replace the arduous but often pointless tasks prisoners had previously been expected to carry out. Having said that, the ending of the treadmill system meant that some prisons lost the power for their cellular sanitation systems (May, 1979).

Amongst the proposals put forward by the Gladstone Committee were increased centralised control of prison industries together with the appointment of local industrial managers. This was intended to relieve Prison Governors of this responsibility. They also looked at the treatment of mentally disordered offenders – another issue which remains problematic –

and the introduction of medical expertise into the membership of the Prisons Board. In addition they considered training needs, bringing in a training period for all staff and an extended probationary period for warders. Prison Inspectors were made accountable to the Home Office, thus reinforcing the programme of centralisation. May (1979), and Bryans and Wilson (2000), suggest that these developments led to confusion over roles within the Prison Service as emphasis shifted towards a treatment model of imprisonment rather than the previous dominant ideologies of retribution and deterrence.

Bryans and Wilson (2000) suggest that the Gladstone Report effectively invented rehabilitation ‘albeit for only certain categories of offenders’ – women, children, young people, alcoholics and first offenders (p2) although how far this was influenced by the early ideas of positivist criminology is unclear. Muncie (2002) suggests that it introduced notions of treatment and began the process of medicalisation of certain types of criminal (women, alcoholics, children) and the growing role of doctors, educators and other professionals within the prison system. This was a radical change in the philosophy of imprisonment but, Bryans and Wilson argue, it was grafted onto previous attitudes adding to confusion in the debate about the aims and purpose of imprisonment, rather than developing and clarifying them.

The Prisons Act of 1898 gave the Secretary of State the power to make rules for the regulation of prisons under the Act. This meant that developments could take place without the need for legislation, which could potentially shorten the time needed to implement changes. This allowed comparatively rapid reaction to events, public pressure, or political change. It also reduced parliamentary oversight of the Prison Service.

### **Prisons in the twentieth century**

The early twentieth century was marked by increasing scepticism about the potential of imprisonment – what it might achieve. These years saw a reduction in the numbers being imprisoned, with the prison population falling by fifty percent in the years from 1908 to 1938, despite an apparent rising crime rate. During this period twenty five prisons closed (Bryans and Wilson, 2000). It is noteworthy that at the beginning of this period

preventive detention was introduced so that those who had served their sentence but were considered to be dangerous, habitual offenders might be kept in prison (Ruggles-Brise, 1921; Camp, 1974). Preventive detention has again been mooted under New Labour for individuals considered to pose a continuing danger, particularly those said to be affected by dangerous severe personality disorder who are viewed as untreatable by much of the psychiatric profession and have therefore not been eligible for detention under the provisions of mental health legislation.

Following the Second World War the prison population increased steadily at about five per cent per year (Bryans and Wilson, 2000). The Criminal Justice Act of 1948 introduced detention centres as part of a hard line approach to law and order, which seems a little surprising next to the welfare reforms that were introduced around this time. Perhaps this was fuelled by the idea that some people are deserving, whilst others are not, which appears to have increasingly taken hold in Labour welfare policy, although it has long been a part of Conservative policy, and of some sectors of Church of England Christianity, which largely underpinned the morality of welfare and justice with ideas of separation of good and evil and avoidance of contamination which we have already seen expressed in the penitentiary system. This hard line approach resulted in an increase in the prison population and in overcrowding which has been a severe and continuous problem. The Prison Service cannot refuse to accommodate people who are sentenced to imprisonment, nor, it seems, can it build sufficient prisons to accommodate those the courts sentence. Indeed, building new prisons may serve to encourage the use of custodial sentences both on a 'the prisons are there so we should use them' basis and, more subtly, by legitimising greater use of imprisonment.

The early 1960s saw the end of the Prison Commission and the passing of prison administration to the Prison Department which was part of the Home Office. As Bryans and Wilson comment, this linked 'the work of prisons very directly with that of the politics of the Home Secretary' (2000: 4). Shortly after this, in 1964, Parliament approved the Prison Rules, last revised in 1999 and consolidated in 2008. These give structure and control

to ‘the minutiae of prison life’ (Loucks, 1999: 6) and are discussed later in this thesis.

In 1966, following three high profile escapes, including George Blake and Ronald Biggs, the report of the Mountbatten Inquiry (HM Government 1966) was published. This report concentrated on prison security and its effects were dramatic as it resulted in measures such as the introduction of closed circuit television; dog handlers and, perhaps most significantly, the categorisation system still used in the Prison Service. Mountbatten also suggested the building of a single prison – Vectis – to house all prisoners requiring conditions of highest security. However this was not adopted and the Service took the advice of the Radzinowicz Committee to disperse these prisoners through the system. By 1970 seven dispersal prisons were operating and, as Bryans and Wilson (2000) report, they had problems from the start, with riots and other major incidents throughout the 1970s (see also Fitzgerald, 1977 for an account of disturbances linked to the organisation Preservation of the Rights of Prisoners – PROP). This was also a period of industrial unrest and these factors led to the setting up of the May Committee in 1978, with the purpose of examining the state of the Prison Service.

The Report of this Committee gives some thought to the attitudes and roles of Governors. It also looks in detail at the purpose of imprisonment before concluding that a rewriting of Prison Rule 1, which delineated the purpose of imprisonment, was needed (May, 1979: 67).

The purpose of the detention of convicted prisoners shall be to keep them in custody which is both secure and yet positive, and to that end the behaviour of all the responsible authorities and staff towards them shall be such as to:

- (a) Create an environment which can assist them to respond and contribute to society as positively as possible;
- (b) Preserve and promote their self respect;
- (c) Minimise, to the degree of security necessary in each particular case, the harmful effects of their removal from normal life;

(d) Prepare them for and assist them on discharge.

Shortly after the publication of the May report in 1979, the first Thatcher government was elected on a 'law and order' ticket. The short-lived short sharp shock was soon introduced and by 1984 youth custody had replaced the borstal system which had been introduced in 1908 under the influence of Sir Evelyn Ruggles-Brise and developed by Alexander Paterson, a member of the Prison Commission who famously said that people were sent to prison 'as punishment, not for punishment' (Grew, 1958; Tumim, 1996). Tumim subsequently wrote 'Punishment is not the business of the Prison Service.' (Tumim, 1996: 11). This sentiment, that it is the deprivation of liberty that is the punishment for the crime and that prisons should not, of themselves, be punitive still underpins official views of imprisonment, if not always popular ones. It is however, hard to see how this ideal could be achieved, something which the current Labour administration seems well aware of as it tries to mitigate the damaging effects of imprisonment, recalling Florence Nightingale's dictum that 'hospitals should do the sick no harm.' Borstals had developed under the influence of the 1894 Committee of Enquiry which had concluded 'The age when the majority of habitual criminals are made lies between the ages of 16 and 21' (quoted in Camp, 1974) – diverting young people from crime remains a significant part of Criminal Justice policy, now focused on the Youth Justice Board.

The hard-line approach of the Thatcher and succeeding Conservative governments led to continued, and worsening, overcrowding. At the same time, however, attempts were made to build on the work of the May Committee with the development of a Race Relations policy; the introduction of Race Relations Liaison Officers in prisons and the attempt by the Control Review Committee to develop positive aims for long term, high security prisoners.

Throughout the early and mid parts of the twentieth century positivism, expressed in the treatment model approach to crime, became the dominant perspective within criminology, reaching its zenith in the 1950s and 1960s (Cavadino and Dignan, 2002) particularly in the USA where indeterminate sentencing became commonplace. It began to decline in popularity during

the 1970s as its own emphasis on scientific research seemed to demonstrate that the treatment model approach to crime did not work, this decline was also influenced by work on total institutions, such as Goffman's study of Asylums (Goffman, 1968) and by the emphasis on security that came out of the Mountbatten Report (May, 1979: 64). The justice model was developed, initially in the USA, as a direct criticism. Morris (1974: 14 –20), for example, is eloquent in his criticism of the treatment model:

The treatment model whose rejection I am suggesting is beguiling. Diagnose the social danger presented by the criminal. Give the treatment of choice. Observe if it takes. Relate release to cure. The criminal and society will both gain thereby. It would be a great trick if we could do it, certainly if we could do it without abuse of fundamental human rights; but we cannot. (Morris, 1974: 15-16)

Within the justice model the causes of crime were seen as structural in that crime arose from the organisation of society, thus factors such as poverty, race and gender take precedence. The treatment model was seen as discriminatory because it tended to disadvantage offenders from poorer, and marginalised, sections of society. It was also seen as inconsistent with justice due to its failure to encompass due process and proportionality.

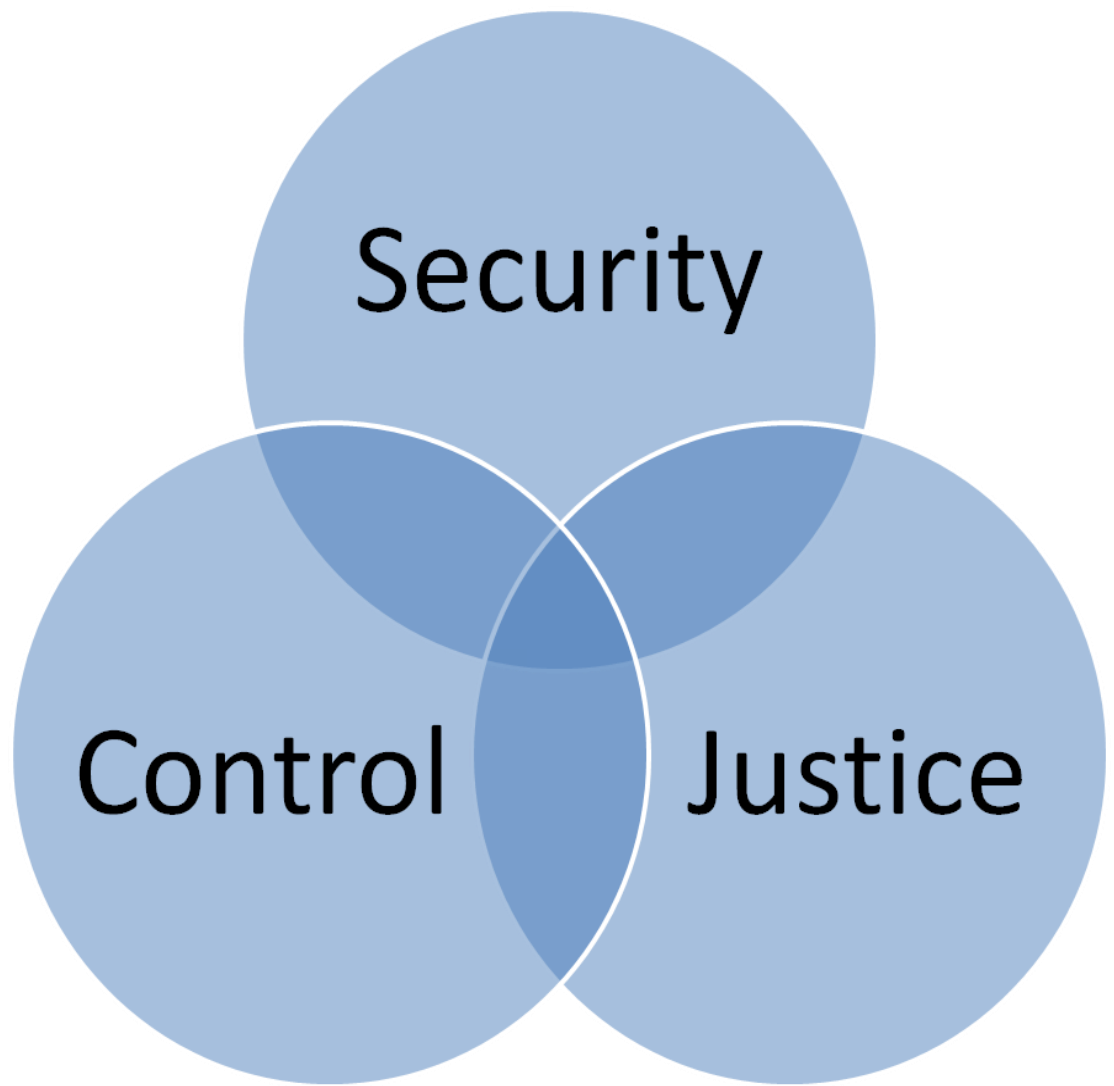
Cavadino and Dignan (2002) suggest that in its emphasis on due process and proportionality the justice model looked back to classicism but, unlike either Beccaria or Bentham, justice theorists were sceptical of either deterrence or reform as justifications for punishment arguing instead that it was justified by retribution and denunciation, a view developed by Murphy in the late 1970s (2003). Other justice model theorists, such as von Hirsch (1976), have linked reductivism and denunciation as justification for imprisonment (Cavadino and Dignan, 2002). Thus there is divergence and disagreement within the justice model, or a plurality of viewpoints.

May (1979: 64) suggests that the justice model was unpopular with both prison staff and the general public because it concentrated on the rights of prisoners rather than their needs. However, it is hard to argue at face value with the idea of a 'justice model'. Whatever its basis or its tenets the name

is intrinsically appealing; everyone wants justice. There is no (politically unpopular) over sympathising with offenders – they will receive justice along with everyone else.

Cavadino and Dignan suggest that the justice model peaked in the UK in the Conservative ‘just deserts’ strategy embodied in the 1991 Criminal Justice Act which they see as an amalgam of this with the populist ‘law and order’ ideas which had been developing since the 1970s. Following the disturbances at Manchester’s Strangeways prison, and a number of others (Carrabine 1998), in 1990 an inquiry was set up under Lord Justice Woolf and Judge Stephen Tumim to investigate the causes of the riots and to make recommendations for preventing such incidents in the future.

The report of this inquiry, commonly referred to as the Woolf Report, suggested that there was a lack of clarity about both what the Prison Service should be doing and how it should be done (Woolf and Tumim, 1991). Rather than using an historical context to examine the role of the Prison Service – the approach taken, for example by May and, up to now, in this chapter, Woolf and Tumim looked at the Prison Service within the context of the Criminal Justice System as a whole. After considerable discussion of the role of the Prison Service Woolf and Tumim developed a three factor model of the essential functions of imprisonment. This can usefully be illustrated by a Venn diagram:



We can clearly see that removing one of the elements from the diagram will take a ‘bite’ from the other two. In other words, in Woolf and Tumim’s model the absence of any one element compromises the remaining two. In this model justice refers to the just treatment of prisoners, such as providing decent conditions and meaningful regimes (Woolf and Tumim, 1991; Faugeron, 1996).

The Conservative government at the time generally accepted the recommendations of the Woolf Report which fitted in with developments in Criminal Justice policy started by Douglas Hurd and continued by his successors, David Waddington and Kenneth Baker, who all saw a need to stem the rising prison population. Kenneth Baker also accepted the need, highlighted by Woolf and Tumim, to improve perceptions of the legitimacy of imprisonment. Woolf and Tumim saw this lack of legitimacy as a major

causal factor in the 1990 prison disturbances and these doubts about imprisonment fitted well with developing Conservative policy.

In 1988 a green paper had been published that stated ‘...imprisonment is not the most effective punishment for most crime. Custody should be reserved for very serious offences, especially when the offender is violent and a continuing threat to the public.’ (Home Office, 1988, quoted in Cavadino and Dignan, 2002: 336). Like Beccaria’s classical criminology, Criminal Justice policy at this time regarded offenders as responsible for their own actions and included principles of proportionality. However, as Cavadino and Dignan point out, policy was bifurcatory with increasingly stringent responses to some, generally more serious, crimes and more lenient ones for those viewed as less serious, leading to a polarity of judicial responses. Faugeron (1996) points out that bifurcatory policies were a feature of Criminal Justice policies in several countries at this time. Also in 1988 the Prison Service statement of purpose which is still in effect today was formulated:

Her Majesty’s Prison Service serves the public by keeping in custody those committed by the courts.

Our duty is to look after them with humanity and help them lead law-abiding and useful lives in custody and after release.

This statement is displayed in Prison Service establishments and could be found on the Prison Service website (<http://www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk>). Perhaps more significantly it was printed on the identity passes issued to all Prison Service staff, becoming more of a credo that staff members carry with them at all times than a detached statement of purpose. It has now been replaced on the website with a statement of purpose with objectives and principles being laid out. The objectives emphasise security issues, security is seen as the key function of prisons; together with reducing re-offending; humane, decent and lawful treatment of prisoners; and supporting the efficient operation of the courts. The principles stress partnership, value, diversity and effective organisation and management. These qualifications of the mission statement were added in a revamp of the

website during 2005 and can be seen as both clarifying it and bringing it in to line with Labour policy.

By 1992 public and media criticism of apparent ‘softness’ towards crime was leading to a harsher approach from government. This was further fuelled by the murder of James Bulger in February 1993. Michael Howard became Home Secretary in May of that year and declared to the Prison Governors’ conference that prisons should be ‘decent but austere’ and, to the Conservative Party conference of the same year, that ‘prison works’ by incapacitation and deterrence. However, this view, while suiting a public horrified by the death of James Bulger, was questioned, notably by Tarling who carried out statistical modelling exercises on a number of sets of data to estimate how much the use of custody would need to be increased to produce a one per cent reduction in reported crime. He produced figures for his three data sets of 22%; 28% and 24% (Tarling, 1993: 153). Writing of the Prison Service at this time Tumim (1996) described it as confused about its purpose and went on to quote from a Guardian article by David Faulkner, former Deputy Secretary at the Home Office:

The Prison Service is unclear whether it is meant to implement the programme set out in the Woolf Report and the Government’s own White Paper, or to concentrate on containing a much-enlarged prison population and on developing more austere regimes. (Faulkner, 1993, quoted in Tumim, 1996:16)

Morrison (1996) describes this period of Conservative administration as being characterised by a series of U-turns as they moved from the harshness of the short sharp shock, through the justice based reformative ideas of the Woolf Report and back to ideas of austerity. Sparks (1996: 74) sees in this idea of austerity a return to the concept of ‘least eligibility’ of nineteenth century prisons – that prisoners should live under conditions ‘that compare unfavourably with conditions of the labouring poor.’ Another instance of ideas resurfacing in a new era.

Cavadino and Dignan see Howard’s attitude as part of a ‘law and order backlash’ designed to bolster flagging popularity with the electorate (2002:

105). A principal part of this was the Criminal Justice Act of 1993 which increased the scope for passing custodial sentences leading to the imposition of more, and longer, prison sentences. US style mandatory and minimum sentences were introduced. These Conservative proposals were supported by New Labour which was developing its stance on crime encapsulated in the words of the shadow Home Secretary Tony Blair ‘tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime’ included in the Labour Party election manifesto of 1997. As we shall see in the following chapter, this punitive attitude has continued, tempered by a stress on rehabilitative strategies, under the successive New Labour administrations.

In this brief, and necessarily incomplete, look at the development of imprisonment in England and Wales I have taken a largely conventional Whig view looking at the purpose of imprisonment from the inside – that is the purpose as seen by those who have administered prisons and imprisonment. This view has not been without its critics. The major critique has come from Marxist historians, notably Rusche and Kirchheimer (1939), who argue that the use of imprisonment is intimately linked with changes to the economic structure of society with imprisonment serving the needs of the ruling elite. Other theorists such as Melossi and Pavarini (1981) have developed Rusche and Kirchheimer’s work to address criticism such as a suggestion that it is overly simplistic. Sparks (1996) comments on the criticisms that have been levelled at Rusche and Kirchheimer’s work but also points out that it has had considerable influence in extending the social analysis of penalty. It is also important to remember that this chapter only looks at imprisonment in England and Wales. For example Morris’s work (1974) cited earlier, talks of prisons being invented in the USA, which of course American prisons were. Thus, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, there is no single history of imprisonment.

Throughout this chapter we have seen how ideas of the purpose of, and justifications for, imprisonment have developed, faded, resurfaced and changed. It is not possible to arrange these in a timeline because they overlap; some elements change while others continue. From this we can draw some understanding of the increasing complexity of the role, or roles,

played by Prison Governors in the management of prisons. Not only have the demands placed on them in terms of the functions of and justifications for imprisonment become more complex but they are also working in a situation where there is a need to deal with change while maintaining continuity. This idea of the co-existence of continuity and change is discussed by Jarzabkowski who suggests:

One of the enduring problems for social theory ... is how a social system can be prone to both repetitive reconstitution of practice, that is, to continuity, and also have the capacity for change. (Jarzabkowski, 2003: 26)

This demonstrates one of the challenges facing Prison Governors, and others in leadership roles whether in public, voluntary or private sectors, how to motivate and implement necessary change while maintaining standards and consistency, and perhaps more critically how to assess what change is necessary and will be beneficial and to determine the criteria by which to assess benefit particularly in a situation where there are several groups of 'stakeholders' whose interests may not only be competitive but may actually be in opposition. Add in to this complex mix elements of ideology and cultural and personal moralities and the difficulties that face the Prison Service as a whole, and Governors in particular, become increasingly apparent.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have briefly examined the development of imprisonment in England and Wales up to the mid 1990s. I have shown how views of the purpose of and justification for imprisonment have shifted over time and how this has contributed to the development of an increasingly complex role, or set of roles, for Prison Governors as the operational managers of prisons within a system which is itself complex. In the following section I shall look in some detail at imprisonment under the New Labour administration that forms the context for this research both for setting the context at the outset of the research and in tracking events and policy which affect prisons and the way Governors perform their roles. I shall also

consider what is currently meant by some key terms within penal practice, such as ‘rehabilitation’.

Writing shortly before the Labour government came to power in 1997 Matthews and Francis (1996: 9) suggested that there were three choices of paradigm for the future of imprisonment:

*Punishment* – an increased use of imprisonment with more austere conditions. A combination of incapacity and deterrence to reduce crime and increase public safety.

*Administrative* – based on risk analysis, a cost effective way of managing aggregate populations through increasing use of technology.

*Progressive* – maintaining standards of decency and recognising the individual needs of prisoners – this refers to Woolf and Tumim’s (1991) idea of justice mentioned earlier. Establishing links between prisons and the wider community.

I will come back to these suggested alternative paradigms in the next chapter, to see how far they are applicable to imprisonment under New Labour.

# **Imprisonment under New Labour**

## **Introduction**

As this research project will, barring political surprises, take place during the third New Labour, Third Way, administration it is worth examining New Labour policies to provide political and ideological contexts for the research. I will commence by offering an overview of New Labour welfare policy before looking in more detail at Criminal Justice policy as expressed through a number of documents published during the three New Labour administrations that have governed to date. Following this context setting the chapter will continue to track events and policy decisions that affect the working lives of Prison Governors during the research.

## **Progressive Governance: The development of New Labour policies**

In the UK the Third Way is associated with Anthony Giddens as theorist and Tony Blair as practitioner under the banner of New Labour. More widely it is also associated with the policies of the Clinton administration and their influence in the UK (Powell, 2003; Deacon, 2000) and the worldwide movement of 'progressive governance' aimed at centre-left renewal (see, for example the Progressive Governance Network: <http://www.policy-network.net/content/345/progressivegovernance>). Lowe (2004) suggests that New Labour stems from reforms made during Neil Kinnock's leadership in the mid 1980s, particularly the expulsion of militant tendency, which were aimed at moving Labour towards a more centrist approach. In 1994 Tony Blair became leader of the Labour Party, Anthony Giddens published *Beyond Left and Right* and the Social Justice Commission advocated an 'active' welfare state. All of these factors played a part in the development of the Third Way (Lowe, 2004).

There has been considerable debate about the provenance of Third Way politics. The work of Giddens and Blair and the influence of Clinton have obviously been important but they did not create the Third Way fully formed from dust like a political golem. However it is useful to look briefly at Giddens' work before considering some of the other literature which has discussed Third Way politics, particularly with regard to social policy.

Giddens (1998, 2000), in his key texts on the Third Way, focuses on re-inventing and strengthening social democracy in order for it to fill the gap left by the political bankruptcy of the socialist Labour left and the neoliberal right wing politics of Thatcherite and post Thatcherite Conservatism.

In terms of criminal justice, which is the main area of interest within this thesis, Giddens emphasises the role of civil society in strengthening social cohesion and reclaiming social space. This viewpoint echoes the reflexive view of research in that it requires individuals to consider their roles within society and how their attitudes, which can be situated on a continuum of social involvement and commitment, affect the quality of social organisation and experience as a whole, especially as experienced by the most vulnerable or deprived members of society. This group within society is most likely to be affected by crime, as both victims and offenders.

Giddens advances 'no rights without responsibilities' as an ethical mantra of Third Way politics, particularly with regard to welfare and notions of welfare to work which have come to underpin Third Way attitudes to welfare. In a society characterised by multi-dimensional inequity this approach, though glibly satisfying at first glance, cannot be viewed as unproblematic.

Giddens regards civil society as in decline and in need of strengthening, linking this to individual and social responsibility and an emphasis on dealing with 'minor' crime and public order which he links in turn to community regeneration. His view emphasises the role of the family as the basis of civil society and has led to prescriptive political attitudes towards parenting which espouse particular cultural and class values leading to a somewhat exclusive notion of social exclusion based on conformity to those values. Within this context Giddens argues for an emphasis on minor crime suggesting that this has a cumulative effect of increasing fear of crime and resulting in people withdrawing from public places that they perceive as dangerous. Giddens has little to say about more serious crime, but I would suggest that while minor crime is a nuisance and the distress it causes

should not be minimised attempts to deal with it may have little effect on major crime which tends to occur out of public view.

While Giddens writes about minor crime and policing he fails to consider issues of judicial punishment and sentencing policy which are of greater relevance to the working lives of Prison Governors, which form the focus of this thesis.

Having briefly looked at Giddens' work I shall now examine some of the responses to the Third Way from within the field of academic social policy.

Powell (2003) provides a useful summary which suggests that the Third Way utilised elements of old Labour and neo-liberalism. Sometimes these have been combined as in their emphasis on rights (from old Labour) together with responsibilities (from neo-liberalism). Sometimes an apparently new approach has been synthesised as in the move from polarised debate about equality to discourse on social exclusion.

Driver and Martell (1999) offer a similar analysis, suggesting that while New Labour does not 'transcend' either old left or new right values it combines features of both in significant new ways. It has been suggested that the originality of Third Way politics lies in its reconciling of the irreconcilable (Driver and Martell, 1999). It does seem that New Labour and its Third Way policies cannot be located conveniently along a continuum between old left and new right. Indeed, any attempt to plot its position relative to those two standpoints would be fragmented and, literally, all over the place.

Frank Field (undated) describes welfare as continually evolving and emphasises the historical context and gradual nature of change. He also traces modern welfare back to its medieval roots – we have seen this in the development of the Prison Service and attitudes to imprisonment in which ideas recur and are altered to fit a new context. Field argues that welfare policies since the late 1970s reflect a return to a 'biblical' view of human nature which had disappeared in Titmuss' emphasis on altruism which permeated more socialist Labour policies. It is debatable how accurate it is to say that the biblical view of human nature is that it is individualist and

self-centred, but this view does seem to fit with New Labour's attitudes to, and policies for, Criminal Justice. Individualism is a view taken by some Christian sects but altruism is also strongly reflected in Christian theology and was expressed in some of the humanitarian reforms of Howard and Fry, even though some of these may seem at best misguided and at worst cruel to modern critics. The individualistic view of human nature provides a way of justifying treating people as though they were ego-centric and introducing a 'Protestant' moral (work) ethic to issues of welfare including criminal justice.

New Labour has introduced strong mechanisms of central control. Milburn (2002) suggests that this is part of the process of devolving control down to local level. The more effectively an organisation works to achieve its targets the more resources it will receive and the more central government will loosen its grip on the reins. Persistent failure will lead to 'a significant degree of intervention from Whitehall' (Hunter 2000). For prisons it also leads to market testing where private contractors are given the opportunity to bid to take over the running of public sector prisons. A notable early example of this was at Brixton where there were no bids from the private sector. Private sector involvement has been a feature of New Labour's approach to service delivery as in the use of PFI for the development of hospitals and prisons and the continued and increasing use of private contractors within public service that was started by the conservatives. Labour has replaced the Conservative market ideology with a pragmatic approach to the use of private money and manpower. Fingers have been burnt as in the refinancing of Altcourse (formerly Fazakerly) prison which netted a large profit for the private consortium involved and left the Prison Service looking somewhat foolish (Comptroller and Auditor General, 2000).

Strong central control is also seen in the continued use of managerialist approaches which have developed from the Conservatives' introduction of general management into public service. Target setting is a strong feature of managerialism; it allows for regulation and enforces uniformity. This can contradict the aim of meeting local and individual demand and need. It is,

however, an appropriate strategy for a government which stresses outcomes rather than processes and claims to be committed to evidence based policy making. This assumes that the targets are appropriate, that they are measured accurately and that evaluation research is of a high standard and is used dispassionately.

Several commentators have tried to delineate the underlying principles of New Labour policies. Powell (2000; 2003) and Powell and Hewitt (2002) list a number of summaries of Third Way values:

Blair (1998) – equal worth; opportunity for all; responsibility; community

White (1998) – real opportunity; civic responsibility; community

Le Grand (1998) – CORA – community; opportunity; responsibility; accountability

Lister (2000) – RIO – responsibility; inclusion; opportunity.

As Powell and Hewitt point out these summaries are all similar. Writing in 2000 Powell added his own acronym to the collection, the ironic PAP – pragmatism and populism. While populism is a general feature of current party politics – as was shown by the main parties laying out goodies for popular appeal in the run up to the 2005 general election – pragmatism is a particularly strong feature of New Labour's approach. Driver and Martell (1999: 155) describe the Third Way as a 'pragmatic political project'. It is, perhaps, this emphasis on pragmatism rather than ideology that has allowed New Labour to combine principles and structures that have previously represented opposing points on the political compass, although Driver and Martell suggest that this is more about rhetoric than substance. However, such combinations are not always without tension. Pragmatism is enshrined in New Labour's adoption of evidence based policy making – the 'what works is what counts' approach where policy derives from values but is not defined by them. The worth of policy is determined principally by outcomes, not by the values it expresses – this seems to be the case with New Labour's approach to Criminal Justice.

Throughout its welfare strategy New Labour emphasises the importance of work. This is seen, for example in the 2002 Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) Report *Reducing Reoffending* which relates a number of factors, including unemployment, to offending. This links to New Labour's emphasis on individual responsibility which permeates its policies on Criminal Justice. The SEU Report and Labour's continued statement of commitment to addressing the problems of social exclusion can be seen as indicative of a belief in, and a desire to ameliorate, problems of marginalisation, to reintegrate people into society. Less positively they can be seen as defining particular groups as deviant and effectively demanding that they conform to certain standards.

The mantra 'tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime' is usefully ambiguous. The causes of crime which, as has already been suggested, are complex and difficult to establish consist of both social and individual factors and take no way-marked deterministic path. Labour tends to focus on the individual, using its populist, pragmatic approach. There has been a particular focus in Labour's approach to persistent offenders, including 'nuisance' offending.

Having briefly considered the basis of New Labour policies I shall now look in some detail at their approach to Criminal Justice, and imprisonment in particular, with an emphasis on key documents including *A Five Year Strategy for Protecting the Public and Reducing Re-offending* (Home Office, 2006) which sets out the Government's approach to Criminal Justice for the five years from its publication.

### **New Labour policies for Criminal Justice**

'On crime, we believe in personal responsibility and in punishing crime, but also tackling its underlying causes - so, tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime,' (Labour Party Manifesto 1997). This sentence effectively summarises the Labour Party's approach to Criminal Justice from coming to power in 1997 to its third term which commenced in 2005. Associated with this are Labour's emphases on evidence based policy, what works, and joined up thinking. Bryans and Wilson (2000) stress the continuity between New Labour and the preceding Conservative administration suggesting that

this is partly explained by ‘the re-moralisation of the politics of ‘law ‘n’ order’ after the murder of James Bulger in 1993, which seemed to propel both major parties into a Dutch auction of ‘toughness’ in relation to crime and punishment.’ This notion of continuity of policy is also discussed by Brownlee (1998) who sees in New Labour’s adoption of a ‘left realist’ approach to Criminal Justice a clear move away from traditional socialist Labour attitudes to a populist, punitive approach. Brownlee suggests that this is in direct contradiction to the managerialist strategy of service delivery which New Labour has also continued to implement and which aims at efficiency and economy.

This policy of toughness found expression in the commissioning by Jack Straw of the prison ship Weare, which had originally been proposed by Michael Howard. Straw also approved the introduction of Secure Training Centres run by private companies. In opposition Jack Straw had described prison privatisation as ‘morally repugnant’ (Bryans and Wilson, 2000: 17), however once in power pragmatism and existing political momentum seemed to take over from moral principle and the role of the private sector has grown both in the provision of prison places and in ancillary services such as catering and transportation.

In 2001 the need for a concerted approach to rehabilitation was expressed by the 10 year plan ‘Criminal Justice: The Way Ahead’. £220 million was to be invested in programmes designed to reduce re-offending, and in providing follow up support for those leaving prison in a system known as custody plus. However money was also to be invested in the creation of 2,500 new prison places (Home Office, 2001). Labour stressed the role of individual responsibility, adopting the carrot and stick approach which has characterised its approach to welfare:

‘Every prisoner leaving custody who needs follow up support or supervision should get it – whatever the length of their sentence. For those who reject this helping hand the message will be equally clear. Rigorously enforced punishments which get progressively tougher the more times an offender returns to court.’ (Blair, 2001).

Later that year David Blunkett reiterated the idea of custody plus, together with an increased use of community sentences to lower the prison population and thereby save money (Manchester News, 2001). The following year David Blunkett took ‘a long, hard look at the state and role of our prisons.’ (Blunkett, 2002). In this article Blunkett put forward to a wider public the idea of intermittent custody, discussed in Justice for All (Home Office, 2002) which was trialled at two prisons in England but seems now to have disappeared from view. The aim of this is to allow custodial sentences to be imposed while preventing some of the problems associated with imprisonment such as loss of employment and family breakdown.

Blunkett (2002) stated that he was ‘not interested in reform for reform’s sake. I want to create a virtuous circle of prevention, detection, punishment and rehabilitation.’ Punishment and rehabilitation provide the main roles for the Prison Service, along with Probation, but prisons would also play a role in prevention by reducing reoffending. Blunkett goes on to write ‘Prisons must be for those who really need to be there’ which emphasises the public protection and incapacitation roles of imprisonment while tacitly acknowledging that there are those for whom prison is not appropriate. Thus in Blunkett’s vision imprisonment has five interconnected purposes: prevention, punishment, rehabilitation, public protection and incapacitation.

In Justice for All we see some of the themes which have emerged in New Labour criminal justice policy and which continue to underpin changes and reforms. These include the need for coherence across what has hitherto been a fragmented service; meeting ‘the needs of society and win[ning] the trust of citizens;’ (p13) emphasis on the rights and needs of victims and the wider community; creating an effective and efficient criminal justice system; making more effective use of community and custodial punishments with an emphasis on reducing re-offending.

The focus on crime reduction continued throughout 2003 and was emphasised in the Queen’s speech of November of that year, additionally the government began to look outside the traditional agencies for help in preventing and dealing with petty, nuisance offences:

My government will continue to make the reduction of crime and the fear of crime a priority. The government will be implementing the Criminal Justice Act to ensure the effective punishment of dangerous and persistent offenders. Firm action will continue to be taken against anti-social behaviour by strengthening the powers available to schools and local authorities. (Queen's speech November 2003, reprinted in Guardian, 2003)

In December 2003 the report on the Review of Correctional Services, carried out by Patrick Carter, was completed. This led to the creation of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) which was designed to amalgamate Prison and Probation Services under one management structure, with NOMS as a commissioning and purchasing arm and the whole being overseen by a single chief executive: During my research the Prison and National Offender Management Services were reorganised such that NOMS became the organisational body for prisons and probation. This is discussed later in the thesis.

This strategy reflects Labour's 'joined up approach' which can also be seen in the introduction of the OASys documentation and assessment system across both prisons and Probation to allow information to be shared more easily. However as reported in a BBC 'File on Four' programme (BBC Radio Four, February 7<sup>th</sup> 2006) this has not run entirely smoothly.

Carter stressed the need for 'end to end' management of offenders from arrest to the termination of their involvement with the Criminal Justice System. This can be seen as analogous to the system of case management which was introduced as part of the move to community based provision for people with learning disabilities. This offender management is to be provided by NOMS – the presence of a single manager allowing for consistency of approach and closing of the gaps between providers which offenders have previously tended to fall through. The focus of offender management is on prevention of re-offending – addressing the high proportion of crime which is committed by repeat and persistent offenders. Carter suggests that 100,000 persistent offenders are together responsible

for 50% of all crime, and that 15,000 of these are in prison at any given time (p 15).

Carter's report falls very much within the New Labour model which has developed over the years of their administration. He emphasises the use of evidence based strategies; effective and efficient use of resources; coherence across the System; rights and needs of victims and the general public, including the need for trust in the Criminal Justice System, that is legitimisation of the System.

The government responded positively to Carter's proposals for managing offenders (Blunkett, 2004) seeing this as 'a 'once in a generation' opportunity to reduce crime by radically transforming prison and Probation services, and those working in partnership with them.' This quote brings in another major element of Labour's approach to social policy, that of partnership. In criminal justice we see this in the establishment of links with health, employment and education services as well as with the voluntary sector designed to address the factors that contribute to offending and re-offending highlighted in the 2002 Social Exclusion Unit Report *Reducing Reoffending*. It is worth remembering that this is not an entirely new approach, the voluntary sector in particular has long played an important role in providing services for offenders. Grew (1958) describes their role in assisting ex-prisoners to find work and accommodation. The novel aspect is the attempt to create a more coordinated system where different agencies share knowledge and experience and a single body (NOMS) sources required services from a range of providers.

Later in 2004 David Blunkett announced extra money for the Prison Service to allow more places to be made available, saying:

Providing modern and effective prisons is central to this Government's objective of reducing re-offending, protecting the public and sending the right signal to those for whom punishment in the community has failed to redeem their behaviour. I am committed to increasing places in prisons and probation to ensure that there is a prison place for all those serious and

persistent offenders that need it and an effective community alternative for less serious offenders.

(Quoted on [www.probation.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.probation.homeoffice.gov.uk), 2004)

At the same time Mr Blunkett announced plans to increase the use of Intermittent Custody following pilots at two prisons which were deemed successful. This was also seen as an example of effective closer working between Prison and Probation services:

Intermittent Custody demonstrates the closer working of the Prison and Probation Services that will be increasingly in evidence over the coming months following the introduction of the National Offender Management Service.

(Paul Goggins, quoted on [www.probation.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.probation.homeoffice.gov.uk), 2004)

The Queen's speech of 2004 included a list of measures relating to Criminal Justice including 'legislation to reduce re-offending by improving the management of offenders.' – a reference to the introduction of the National Offender Management Service.

This was repeated verbatim in the 2005 speech that followed Labour's winning of the general election. Generally, although there is mention of tackling violent, and drink related, crime, the emphasis of rhetoric had by now shifted to prevention of terrorism and tightening up on immigration and asylum.

2005 saw the publication of the NOMS National Reducing Re-offending Delivery Plan (Home Office, 2005) which set out how the aims of the 2004 Action Plan (Home Office, 2004) were to be put into practice. This document builds on previous government publications. The key aim is to manage offenders effectively thereby reducing the incidence of re-offending with a continuing emphasis on public protection and partnership working. The complex causality of offending is acknowledged with several aspects, or pathways, of the offender management process being delineated:

Accommodation

Education, training and employment

Health

Drugs and alcohol

Finance, benefit and debt

Children and families

Attitudes, thinking and behaviour.

These aspects derive from the SEU report of 2002, and reflect a view that offending behaviour has both individual and social causes. The social causes operate at both micro and macro levels, thus families are seen as important in the prevention of re-offending as is the offender's integration into wider society in which, of course, family and friendship networks play an important role.

In February 2006, five years into Labour's ten year plan, *A Five Year Strategy for Protecting the Public and Reducing Re-offending* was published. This states 'Keeping the public safe is the first duty of the Criminal Justice System.' This document is consistent with the proposals of the Carter Review and with the plans laid down in the NOMS strategy. Like them it stresses the need to use prison appropriately, recognising that there are situations – such as repeat short sentences, the 'revolving door' of imprisonment – where prison may prove counterproductive to the aim of reducing re-offending. Thus prisons should be used as part of a coherent overall strategy with imprisonment being used for dangerous offenders where public protection is an issue and as part of a rising scale of sanctions against persistent offenders. Risk assessment and collaborative working will provide the basis of offender management, with public protection as the cornerstone. Although sometimes offenders and former offenders also need protection.

Reparation and rehabilitation form the other two principles of the approach laid out. Reparation is seen as demonstrating to the public that offenders are not 'getting away with it', as giving something back to the victims of crime and as a positive experience for offenders themselves. It forms part of the process of rehabilitation, a term which tends to be used without definition and the meaning of which is unclear in the context of Criminal Justice. For someone admitted to hospital for treatment of an illness or injury

rehabilitation generally means enabling them, as far as possible, to resume their previous life. This is absolutely not the case in prison rehabilitation where the aim is to move people away from their previous lives which are seen as contributing to their offending and to encourage/oblige them to adopt a new set of social norms and behaviours which are deemed acceptable. This is clearly expressed in such things as the emphasis on work which has long been a feature of life for convicted prisoners, even though it has not always been available to them. Brownlee (1998: 324) suggests that

‘Rehabilitation, or any kind of re-integrative strategy for that matter, rests upon the assumption that society is built on a ‘common normative universe’ – involving reward-oriented behaviour derived from the labour market – into which offenders can be resocialised.’

Brownlee goes on to suggest that the ‘permanent economic marginalisation’ experienced by some groups within society renders this an unattainable ideal, although it could now be argued that steps being taken to address social exclusion will ameliorate this.

The problems of the appropriateness, or otherwise, of imprisonment for certain people were vividly demonstrated by a BBC2 documentary about Styal women’s prison shown on February 27, 2006. This showed the plight of women prisoners with severe mental illness, personality disorders and histories of substance misuse, together with the strain this places on prison staff at all levels who are charged with looking after these women when, as one prison officer pointed out, they are not psychiatric nurses, nor do they have the facilities available in secure psychiatric accommodation. The result was a high frequency of self harm, attempted suicide and challenging behaviours amongst some of the women, coupled with emotional and physical exhaustion amongst the staff (see Crawley, 2004 for an account of emotional labour amongst prison officers). This demonstrates the importance of strategies designed to ensure that imprisonment is used in the most appropriate manner possible, even without taking into account other factors such as effectiveness of interventions and the economic bottom line.

Linked to the idea of using prisons more appropriately is the view, put forward in the Strategy, that prisons must be fit for purpose. There is an echo of David Blunkett's (2002) article in that this document suggests that there is a need for 'major change to our whole system' (Home Office, 2006: 10). However, to state the obvious, the system has to carry on functioning while change is planned and implemented. Courts will still sentence people to prison and prisons will still have to accommodate them whether prison appears to be the most appropriate approach for that individual and whatever changes they may be trying to implement. Mooney (2005) demonstrates this in an enthusiastic description of the re-rolling of Durham prison from a high security to a community prison.

At the start of 2006, as I embark on this research project, Labour is putting forward what is suggested to be a programme of dramatic change in the use of the Prison Service within the Criminal Justice System. However, as we have seen, their approach has remained largely consistent since they came to government in 1997. There is still an emphasis on the rhetoric of 'toughness', with a softer voiced acknowledgement of the individual needs of prisoners and the need to use prison appropriately and sparingly. Overall Labour's approach to Criminal Justice and the use of prisons in particular can be summarised as stressing:

Public protection

Rehabilitation and reparation

Prevention, particularly of re-offending

Value for money

Prison and Probation partnership.

It will be interesting to see how the strategy develops and is implemented, particularly how it is implemented 'on the ground' by individual Prison Governors in individual establishments. There is also the intriguing fact that the Strategy contains the possibility of high-performing prisons being given greater autonomy and freedom from central control, a policy already adopted for hospitals and schools. This did not materialise during my research and, indeed it seemed that Governors were becoming more, rather

than less, subject to central control with the introduction of practices such as the standardised core day.

More recently the government has placed more stress on punitive responses to offending in what appears to be an attempt to garner popular support before a general election in 2010. Less publicised developments include a re-launch of the NOMS strategy which had been beset by problems from its inception. The Probation Service had actively campaigned against it and its purpose, as is discussed by some of the Governors in this study, was unclear. Following the re-organisation of the Home Office and the setting up of the Ministry of Justice the National Offender Management Service came under the auspices of the new Ministry under the leadership of Phil Wheatley who up to then had been Director General of the Prison Service (Phil Wheatley retired from this position in 2010). Ten regional Directors of Offender Management have been appointed from a variety of backgrounds.

Part of the NOMS strategy was to develop a shared information system for Prisons and Probation – the C-NOMIS system. In 2009 the National Audit Office published a highly critical report on the development of this system, citing slow progress, delayed implementation and a large overspend. These criticisms were echoed in Parliament in an exchange between David Taylor and David Hanson in which Taylor suggested that ‘Perhaps the guilty parties in Syscon and NOMS could be locked up for egregious negligence as a pilot group in one of the minister’s fabled Titan prisons – if there is one big enough.’ At this time Hanson claimed that the system was back on track and that the expected overspend had been substantially reduced. (Hansard, 2009) However, in November 2009 it was further criticised by the Public Accounts Committee.

David Taylor’s reference to Titan prisons raises another issue which has consistently beset government and the Prison Service - that of an increasing prison population. Governors in this study referred to the effects of population increases and the pressures this placed on them and other prison staff. Several prisons have undertaken enlargement programmes, including some in this study, to provide extra places.

The Titan prisons were initially suggested in a review by Lord Patrick Carter, published in 2007. Three were to be built, each accommodating some 2,500 prisoners. In presenting the report and this proposal Jack Straw placed it within a context of a successful approach to crime reduction and consistent policy approaches, rather than as a desperate measure to alleviate persistent overcrowding as others have seen it. Straw said:

Let me first give the context of the review. For more than half a century, from the end of the war, crime rose inexorably. As each successive government left office, crime was higher than when they came in, significantly higher in the case of the 1979–1997 administration.

In sharp contrast, we are the first government since the war under whom crime has not risen, but fallen and fallen by a third. Violent crime is down, burglary and vehicle crime are down, and the chance of being a victim of crime is lower than at any time since 1981.

These improvements are due to many factors: the police, local communities, local authorities, industry, stronger powers to deal with disorder, substantial youth justice reform, and greatly increased investments in law enforcement, with 14,000 more police officers, bringing numbers to record levels. In turn, those improvements have led to many more serious, persistent and violent offenders being brought to justice, and being sentenced for longer.

The result has been a very rapid growth in the prison population, which is up by one third since 1997 from 60,000 to 81,500, last Friday's figure. During the same period reoffending rates have improved while the physical condition of prison has been transformed, as has security. I pay particular tribute to prison officers, probation officers and staff at all levels. They do a difficult job in difficult circumstances.

The whole house is agreed that, whenever appropriate, offenders should be punished in the community. Overall, investment in Probation services has gone up by 72% in real terms over the last 10

years. We shall test intensive alternatives to custody, and provide sentences with more rigorous non-custodial regimes.

Of course, the House and the country are clear that prison has to be used for violent, serious persistent and dangerous offenders. With so many factors in play, forecasting future trends in the prison population has always been complex and uncertain. Predictions made over the previous seven years have put the prison population for this summer both at 20,000 above and 12,000 below its actual level of 80,600. However there is no doubt that the prison population will continue to rise in the next few years, given the increasing effectiveness of the system in bringing more offenders to justice. To meet previously anticipated demand a program of 9500 extra places is already underway. An extra 1600 new places have come on stream in 2007 and a further 2300 will do so next year.

In light of Lord Carter's recommendations, I can now announce that to secure the long-term availability of prison places, I have agreed with the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer additional funding of £1.2 billion on top of the £1.5 billion already committed, to deliver a further and extended building program that will bring an additional 10,500 places on stream by 2014. We will act on Lord Carter's recommendation to build up to three large Titan prisons, housing around 2500 prisoners each. That extra capacity will help us to modernise the prison estate, close some of the older, inefficient prisons on a new-for-old basis, and reconfigure some of the smaller sites to accommodate female or juvenile offenders. (Straw, 2007)

These proposals were criticised on a number of counts, including the problems of building such large establishments near the major conurbations where it was anticipated most future prisoners would originate from and the likelihood that such a system would mean prisoners being sent some distance from home with resulting difficulties for families and friends and in resettlement. They were also criticised in principal as a reflection of a penal system which relies too heavily on imprisonment. Further doubt arose

around issues of maintaining security and decency in such large establishments. (BBC News Website, 2007)

Paul Tidball, then president of the Prison Governors' association, commented:

‘These can only work in high-population centres – or they will be the enemy of closeness to home. Also, small local prisons tend to be adjacent to main railway stations facilitating easy...visits by prisoners' families and official visitors.’ (BBC News Website, 2007)

Subsequently plans for building the Titan prisons were abandoned and in 2009 plans were announced for building five 1,500 place prisons with the first to be built in Barking and Chelmsford.

In the same speech as he announced the Titan prisons Jack Straw also announced that the Corston Report (Home Office, 2007) was about to be published. This review of women's prisons advocated the building of small prisons where women prisoners could be accommodated near to homes and families. It seems to have disappeared without trace.

## **Conclusions**

Prison policy under New Labour has focused increasingly on populist policies which emphasise toughness and punishment. In assessing the overall effects since Labour came to power in 1997 I shall look in some depth at the evaluations of one former and one present Governing Governor.

Professor Andrew Coyle is a distinguished academic who spent some 25 years working in the Prison Service at senior level and governed a number of prisons, including Brixton. He has twice been a Perrie lecturer at the Prison Service conference, in 1993 and 2005 (Coyle, 2005). In 1993 a lecture was also given by then shadow Home Secretary, Tony Blair, and in his 2005 lecture Andrew Coyle reflected on what Tony Blair had said.

Coyle calls his 2005 lecture ‘Imprisonment: The Four Blair Principles’. These were:

A coherent sentencing framework;

Developing prison regimes to promote rehabilitation;

Prisons accountable solely to the state;

Minimum use of custody for juvenile and young offenders.

In 1993 Blair had observed that sentencing practices were inconsistent across the country and in recognition of this Labour set up the Sentencing Guidelines Council in 2003 with Blair saying ‘The prospects of reforming offenders are usually better if they stay in the community, provided that the public is properly protected.’ Coyle comments that despite this assertion Labour has presided over a massive increase in the prison population. I quoted earlier at some length from Jack Straw who aligned this increase with a more effective Criminal Justice system. Coyle argues that, ‘Whatever the measurements one uses, this increase cannot be attributed to an increase in crime, nor to an increase in detection rates. The main reason for the increase is that the courts are sending more people to prison than they did before and sending them there for longer periods.’ He goes on to quote Martin Narey, former Director General of the Prison Service and first head of the National Offender Management Service who said in 2004, ‘The Prison Service is being overrun with very many short-term prisoners – lots of people who are in prison now who would not have been in prison 10 years ago.’

Coyle compares imprisonment rates in England and Wales with those in a number of European countries, ours are much higher. He refers to the 2002 Council of Europe meeting of the heads of prison administrations at which clear reference was made to the political dimension of sentencing practice:

...levels of imprisonment in each country are usually influenced much more by political decisions than by levels of crime or rates of detection of crime. A society can choose to have a high or low rate of imprisonment and this choice is reflected in the sentencing patterns adopted by individual judges. In recent years a number of European countries, especially in the West, have decided, either consciously or by default, to have higher rates of imprisonment. They have done this through the introduction of more punitive legislation or as a result of

politicians and the media encouraging judicial authorities to send more people to prison for longer periods of time.

In 2004 the government accepted a recommendation from Lord Carter, who was later to recommend the building of Titan prisons, referred to earlier, that the prison population should be checked at 80,000. Coyle questions ‘Why it was decided to check the prison population at 80,000. Why not check it when it was at 65,000 in 1998 or in 2002 when Martin Narey talked about “the insanity of a prison population that may hit 70,000 this summer”?’ On Friday November 20th 2009 the prison population was 84,681, and the government has stated its intention to increase capacity to 96,000.

Moving on to the second Blair principle, the development of prison regimes to promote rehabilitation, Coyle comments that there has been success in a number of areas as measured by Prison Service criteria. Governors I met with referred to the key performance targets and measurement criteria that they are subject to. Coyle has no argument with the principal of accountability, but he worries that there is an over-emphasis in the Prison Service’s managerial approach on process rather than on outcomes. Coyle refers to the increasing population as a major factor impeding the development of effective regimes. People serving short sentences are in prison long enough for it to severely disrupt their lives on release, but not long enough for any work to be done to help them prepare for this. An additional effect of population pressure is greater movement of prisoners around the country, affecting continuity of provision. For example a young offender at one institution may begin learning a trade, only to be moved somewhere else where this training is not available.

As Director General Martin Narey had emphasised decency as a core value for the Prison Service, with the defining criteria being ‘Would I be content for my son or daughter to be locked up and treated in the way that prisoners are treated in this prison?’ Since Coyle made this speech the Prison Service has been made subject to sizeable budget cuts and the introduction of a standard core day which cuts down the amount of time prisoners spend out of their cells, impinging on education, employment and leisure

opportunities. Governors are anxious about the effects this might have both on prisoner well being and rehabilitation and on safety and security.

Coyle next reviews the fourth of Blair's principles - the minimum use of custody for juveniles and young offenders. Coyle refers to a report published in June 2005 following a visit by the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights which referred to juvenile justice. While praising improvements in the Youth Justice System the Commissioner expressed concern at rising numbers of juveniles (children) in custody and, in particular at the potential damaging effect of custodial sentences, making particular reference to suicides and incidents of self-harm by young prisoners. Coyle quotes from the Commissioner's report:

Juvenile and young offenders will often have endured troubled and disrupted childhoods. Special attention to their educational and psychological needs is consequently required if their detention, at such a critical time in their development, is to contribute to their rehabilitation and reinsertion into society. All those I spoke to in the prison system were naturally sensitive to these imperatives, but it is difficult to conclude that they are entirely being satisfied. Indeed the overall impression I obtained was of a detention system that placed too much emphasis on punishment and control and not enough on rehabilitation.

It is hardly surprising, under such conditions, though extremely worrying, that 19 children should have hung themselves in YOIs over the last decade. One can only conclude that the prison service is failing in its duty of care towards juvenile inmates.

Finally, Coyle goes back to Blair's principle of imprisonment 'primarily and solely' by the State. The building of private prisons has continued under Labour, Coyle suggests that the concept of prisons has been changed by this – prisons have become a marketplace and 'a business which will inevitably expand.' Since the building of the first private prison in 1992 fourteen more private prisons have been built although two of these were taken into Prison Service management. Coyle suggests that private prisons

are subject to less scrutiny than public ones. In his 1993 speech Blair suggested that privatisation of prisons would divert energies from where they can best and most properly be used. Coyle suggests that this can be seen to be happening in repeated reorganisation of the Prison Service during which the question has never been asked whether the system is fundamentally flawed. As part of this issue Coyle discusses the National Offender Management Service commenting that:

It appears to me that many people, both inside and outside the prison and Probation services, including those who are well disposed to NOMS, it would now seem, some at a senior level in government, are finding difficulty in understanding exactly what NOMS is meant to be.

This sentiment was echoed by some of the Governors in this study. Coyle remarks on the lack of a reference point to wider society for NOMS which he suggests sees those people who fall into its remit solely as offenders and views every aspect of their existence through that prism. This is an argument familiar within other areas of 'social care' for example viewing people with disabilities entirely from the perspective of disability.

Interestingly in discussing privatisation Blair decided to leave aside ideological considerations, which might seem to be of considerable importance and Coyle followed the same path saying that he was not lecturing on privatisation. However, as I discussed earlier Jack Straw expressed moral reservations about the use of private prisons before Labour came to power and for many people, including the Governors I met with, this remains an important issue whether because they are committed to public service or because they question the moral principle of private prisons.

Coyle finishes his lecture with a number of suggestions for meeting Blair's challenge of 'diverting our energies ... where they "should be properly set."' The first of these is a 'more parsimonious' use of imprisonment. The second is to develop prisons with much stronger local connections. The third is to review the infrastructure of the Prison Service, reducing central

control in favour of local accountability; and, finally and crucially, re-examining the concept and model of imprisonment going beyond a view which regards high levels of reoffending as a failure of the system to look at it as a ‘failure of the concept of imprisonment as a vehicle for personal change.’ Repeated assertions of commitment to greater use of community sentencing suggest government support for this view, yet use of imprisonment continues to rise and current expansion programmes do not demonstrate a commitment to stemming, let alone turning that tide.

In 2007 Jamie Bennett, then working in the Prison Service security group, now a Governing Governor and also researching for a Ph.D. on Governors, published a review of the first ten years of the New Labour administration. He begins by examining the inheritance Labour received from the outgoing Conservative government, in particular from Michael Howard as home secretary who favoured a ‘decent but austere’ approach to imprisonment with a lessening of ‘privileges’ and an increased focus on security which was strengthened following escapes from Whitemoor in 1993 and Parkhurst in 1994. A general toughening of attitude towards people convicted of offences was also fuelled by the murder of James Bulger in 1993 which produced an outburst of moral panic.

Howard also clamped down on the Prison Officers’ Association taking steps to curtail its power within the service which culminated in making it illegal for Prison Officers to take strike action. This period also saw the introduction of more business oriented management practices into the Prison Service, as discussed previously. This New Public Management approach (Raine and Willson, 1997) included the introduction of key performance indicators across the Service, together with some level of delegation of control, of responsibility for finance and personnel and a focus on efficiency.

Bennett describes Labour’s inheritance as ‘including increasing prison population, more restrictive conditions, an emasculated union, increased managerial control and the opening up of prisons to the market.’ He suggests this was characteristic of ‘American-style penal populism’.

Bennett suggests that the Labour slogan ‘tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime’ which Tony Blair had first used as shadow Home Secretary appeared to appeal to both the sense of social justice desired by the traditional Labour voter, whilst also appealing to more populist sentiments.

Labour’s manifesto for its first term included a number of criminal justice measures including tackling youth offending and anti-social behaviour both of which have continued to be key elements in Labour’s approach. Specifically on prisons Labour said:

The prison service now faces serious financial problems. We will audit the resources available, take proper ministerial responsibility for the service and seek to ensure that prison regimes are constructive and require prisoners to face up to their offending behaviour. (Labour Party, 1997)

The prison population continued to rise, but in 1999 home detention curfew (HDC) was introduced allowing early release of prisoners under certain conditions. Initially this resulted in a reduction in the adult male prison population. Bennett argues that rather than demonstrating that Labour were committed to decarceration the stringent conditions attached to HDC made recall likely and that, combined with a tendency, as described by Coyle, for sentence lengths to creep up this policy may have contributed to increasing the prison population.

Labour also made considerable investments in aspects of imprisonment, such as educational programmes reflecting an emphasis on rehabilitative aspects of imprisonment. These measures were, however, criticised by some who saw the increased prevalence of attitudes of self-responsibility amongst prisoners as tending to legitimise rather than challenge the use of imprisonment in that ‘failure’ to succeed under rehabilitative measures could lead to longer time in prison.

One of the most significant features of this term of office was the introduction of the Decency Agenda which had first been advocated by Martin Narey. This concept has received general support throughout the

service but, as Bennett suggests it can also serve to legitimise imprisonment and deflect attention from the uncomfortable question raised by Andrew Coyle – whether the concept itself is flawed.

Like Coyle, Bennett discusses prison privatisation, also quoting from Tony Blair's 1993 Perrie lecture – 'I am fundamentally opposed both in principle to the privatisation of the Prison Service and indeed in practice.' and comments that this commitment was dropped once Labour were in power. This may in part have been due to a difficulty in changing tack, but Labour does appear to have embraced privatisation as a fundamental part of its programme for developing the Service.

Bennett remarks upon the expansion of managerialist approaches which had begun under Conservative administration with an expansion in the role of audit and the introduction of key performance targets for individual prisons and performance indicators across the Service. These formed part of a raft of measures which allowed prisons to be rated and presented in 'league tables' with associated positive and negative consequences for good or bad performance despite the considerable variation between prisons which renders any apparent comparison meaningless.

In evaluating Labour's first term, Bennett suggests that it can be seen as challenging the penal populism of the Conservative government by reversing the rise in prison population and engaging with issues of morality and decency. However, Bennett argues that Labour's policies served to legitimise increased use of imprisonment and laid the foundations for expansion in the use of imprisonment as a response to crime in a paradoxical effect.

In examining Labour's second term Bennett draws attention to promises of modernisation and a focus on persistent offenders who were to receive more severe penalties while custodial sentences were to be designed to minimise reoffending through a combination of punishment and rehabilitation.

The reduction in population after the introduction in HDC was lost and numbers of female prisoners rose dramatically, numbers of juvenile and

young offenders incarcerated also rose. The Criminal Justice Act of 2002 introduced a number of measures which could serve to push up prison populations, perhaps most significantly the introduction of indeterminate sentencing for violent or sexual offences. At the same time reductions in early releases and an increase in the use of recall to prison of people released under supervision also contributed to the increasing population.

With regard to the experience of prisoners, the tool for Measuring the Quality of Prison Life (MQPL) (Liebling and Arnold, 2002) was introduced and is completed every two years. It aims to assess prisoners' views of their quality of life in relation to a number of elements: respect, humanity, support, relationships, trust, fairness, order, safety, well-being, development in prison, development with family, decency, power, social life, belonging and quality of life. Bennett reports that it has been suggested that rather than being, as it appears, a praiseworthy attempt to monitor and improve prison life and give a voice to prisoners, this can be seen as an attempt to re-legitimise prisons.

Regarding industrial relations Bennett suggests that overall this period saw some improvement, with greater cooperation, for example, in the performance testing of a number of prisons.

This period also saw the introduction of NOMS, supposedly as a commissioning body but one which lacked the resources and skills for such a role, as some of the Governors in this study point out, following a report by Patrick Carter (2003). Carter also recommended greater contracting out of services and routine market testing of prisons.

Bennett suggests that this second Labour term saw some improvements, for example in industrial relations and the introduction of a moral aspect to performance measurement through MQPL, but that this was coupled with a more regressive penal ideology which combined populism with an increasingly commercial model. It was also marked by a dramatic increase in population, resulting on occasion in the use of police cells to accommodate prisoners at considerable financial and logistical cost to the Prison Service.

For its third term Labour continued to 'talk tough' on crime and its 2005 manifesto emphasised the number of new prison places that had been built since 1997 (Labour Party, 2005). In 2007 the population reached 80,000, the point at which the Government had said the number would be capped. The response to this was not to look for long-term means of reducing the population but to announce 8000 new places. HDC was made more restrictive with tighter eligibility criteria, adding to the pressure on places and creating difficulties in maintaining the decency agenda due to the mix of crowded prisons and so-called 'churning', the movement of prisoners between prisons.

In evaluating the first ten years of New Labour government Bennett notes some improvements in prison conditions and a move towards improved industrial relations. He notes the introduction of a moral character, developed largely from the work of Alison Liebling (Liebling and Arnold 2002, Liebling assisted by Arnold 2005). Bennett suggests that the most enduring legacy of Labour's first ten years will be the massive and continuing rise in prison population, fuelled by increasingly populist 'tough' attitudes towards crime and offending behaviour.

... the impact of this has been felt most keenly among some of the more marginalised and powerless groups in society, including women, young people and members of Black and minority ethnic communities. The policies of the last decade, indeed the last 15 years, have acted to confirm that punitiveness and increasing prison populations are no longer a party political issue, but are now a fundamental characteristic of modern politics. As a result this approach has become institutionalised...

Thus Coyle and Bennett, while acknowledging some improvements in prison conditions, both paint a depressing picture of a Prison Service subject to increased standardisation and centralisation, situated within an increasingly punitive Criminal Justice System in which harsher sentencing practices have resulted in an exponential increase in population which shows no sign of abating.

To end this chapter I will return to Jack Straw who spoke at the Prison Governors' Association Conference in October 2007. Reflecting on ten years of Labour government Straw said:

When I became Home Secretary in 1997, I inherited a Prison Service that was under enormous strain from catastrophic tensions between the then head of the Prison Service and the then Home Secretary, Michael Howard, and some very high profile Cat A escapes. Thankfully, and it certainly shows the power of prayer if nothing else, there have been no Cat A escapes since then. But this fact is no necessary guide to the future, eternal vigilance and good systems are the only way to prevent escapes – and continue this downward path in other categories.

Now in 2007, returning to the brief as Justice Secretary, I recognise the different set of pressures that the current prison population creates. Pressures of maintaining order and control, of continuing to house prisoners with decency, the impact on industrial relations, difficulties around cell-sharing risk assessments, all practical manifestations of prison population pressures, all stresses that you have to bear...

We need to look fundamentally at the sort of society we want to live in. We could have a US style system with the rates of incarceration five times our own. The consequences financially and socially would be dire, but most importantly it simply would not in my view, help to bring down crime and cut reoffending. In all these discussions that must be a central focus.

## **Recent Research on Prison Governors**

Much of the more recent work on Prison Governors and prison governance in England and Wales has been carried out by Shane Bryans and David Wilson, both former Governing Governors. This brief review will draw extensively on their work as authors and editors as it comprises the major part of the available, recent literature. In 1998 they jointly authored a book entitled *The Prison Governor: Theory and Practice*, with a second edition being published in 2000. This was the first book published in the UK which attempted to examine closely the role of Governing Governors and, as such, I will discuss it at some length.

Bryans' and Wilson's book is a combination of description and textbook. They analyse the components of the role of Governing Governors and examine how the role and its requirements have changed over recent years. In particular they consider those factors which they feel set governorship apart from other areas of public sector management.

Bryans and Wilson examine a number of attempts to analyse and define the role of Governing Governor, making the point that no single job description had been drawn up and accepted. Governing prisons shares much with other public service management posts – such as the expectation that resources will be used with economy and savings made where possible. It is the elements that set governing apart that are particularly interesting. Some of these were discussed in a report prepared in 1995 by a management consultancy, EDMC, discussed by Bryans and Wilson, and include:

Security issues relating to keeping prisoners in custody;

Humane care;

Provision of opportunities for prisoners to address their offending behaviour;

Strategic planning and development in line with overarching goals of the Prison Service, including justification of establishment funding;

Maintenance of 'quasi-military' command mode so that serious incidents can be dealt with rapidly and effectively;

Negotiation with parties in and outside the prison;

Representing the prison;

Representing the State to prisoners;

Assessing and managing risk, making decisions about lives of prisoners;

Managing staff and prisoners, often in an atmosphere of heightened sensitivity.

EDMC comment on the contradictory nature of the demands made on Governors and on the 'loneliness' of the role.

Bryans and Wilson suggest that the goals of public sector organisations are less clear than those of the private sector. One factor which illustrates this and which, as Bryans and Wilson point out, requires a particular kind of awareness is the element of political control that public sector services are subject to. In addition public services also embody government policy. Thus Bryans and Wilson suggest that Governors need political awareness and 'nous' because events in prisons can have repercussions up to the highest levels of government. Linked to this is one of the key functions of prisons – that of keeping people in custody. An escape by a category A prisoner, especially one who had acquired notoriety, would be likely to have serious repercussions. As part of the maintenance of security Governors have to be able to assume command during incidents such as riots or other disturbances, fires and fights as well as supporting staff in dealing with distressing incidents such as suicide, self-injury, death of a prisoner and assaults on staff. That brief description gives some idea of the singularity and complexity of the role of a Governing Governor. Possibly only senior managers in special hospitals face a similar range of challenges.

Another aspect peculiar to the role of Governing Governors is their legal status. The legal basis of the term 'Governor' traces back to 'An Act for the Better Ordering of Prisons' of 1839. It has been suggested (McConville, 1975) that the adoption of the title of Governor was linked to a rise in the status of the profession associated with the development of the penitentiary movement. Present day Governing Governors possess a particular legal status, defined by the Prison Act 1952 which states 'Every prison shall have a governor, a chaplain and a medical officer and such other officers as may be necessary.' Thus the Governing Governor is one of three roles within prisons which are defined, and required, by statute. The Act itself gives

little guidance as to the duties required of Governors, beyond their authority to delegate certain functions – such as searching of prisoners and that ‘Every prisoner shall be deemed to be in the legal custody of the governor of the prison.’ This emphasizes the high degree of responsibility that the role carries.

The role of Governor is further delineated within the Prison Rules (1999, consolidated October 2008). Specific duties for Governors set out in the Prison Rules are principally concerned with the maintenance of control, discipline, security and safety, they frequently involve the exercise of discretion by the Governor and they can be delegated by the Governor with the approval of the Secretary of State. Duties relate to areas such as:

Promoting social rehabilitation of prisoners and maintaining contact with families;

Ensuring that prisoners understand their rights and obligations;

Controlling access to tobacco and smoking;

Supervision of visits;

Monitoring and possible interception of letters, telephone calls and items sent in to prisoners;

Custody and safekeeping of prisoners’ property;

Authorising use of CCTV for observation;

Segregation and restraint;

Investigation and adjudication of disciplinary charges;

Dealing with complaints and requests;

Searching of prisoners and staff;

Removal of individuals from the prison, authorising entry into prison;

Notifying next of kin of illness, injury or death of a prisoner. In the case of death notifying the Independent Monitoring Board and the Secretary of State.

This is not an exhaustive list but it serves to indicate that security and control are paramount, while caring for prisoners and their families is also recognised as part of the Governor’s role.

Bryans and Wilson stress the Governing Governor's independence from the Home Secretary (now the Justice Minister) in a number of areas. The relationship between the two seems a complex one, with Governors being subject to the Home Secretary in some areas, having independent powers in others and, officially at least, having to obtain the approval of the Home Secretary for the delegation of powers.

Although many Governors do not have a job description as such, certain competencies necessary for the role have been identified. Shane Bryans and Chris Roden developed a description of the role of Governor in 1999, which is outlined in Bryans and Wilson. They identify four elements of the role: leading, interpreting, resourcing and representing.

The notion of leadership is the most complex of these four elements; this in itself is not unique to Governors, all leadership roles are complex. However Governors work within a particularly complex, and at times fragile, set of parameters which require understanding of, and the ability to work with, the emotions found within a prison (see also Crawley, 2004, Liebling and Price 2001, for discussions of this regarding prison officers).

Regarding interpretation the Governor's role is two-fold, both to explain policy decisions to staff and prisoners and to devise means of enacting those decisions that are appropriate to the individual establishment. They have to attempt to reconcile apparent contradictions that arise due to the conflicting and changing demands and expectations to which prisons are subject.

Governors have to obtain, manage and justify resources for their prison. Bryans and Wilson express this well: 'The challenge for the governor is to achieve the key performance targets and to deliver better outcomes against a background of infinite demands and limited resources.' (p33). The challenge is also to deliver on the 'soft' less easily quantified demands and expectations of the service, political masters and of society at large.

The final element in Wilson and Bryans' quartet is representation. This can operate at various levels from relatively small personal occasions, such as funerals, staff retirements, presentation of awards to making representations

to Headquarters, at stakeholders meetings and, sometimes, to Parliamentary committees and international forums.

A draft job description for Governors was drawn up in 1998, but never implemented (Bryans and Wilson). This covers core principles, aspects of managing the prison establishment, including business management, people (staff and prisoners) management, boundary management – working with external agencies, the Independent Monitoring Board and the wider public.

In 2000 Phil Wheatley, now Director General of the National Offender Management Service, then Deputy Director General of the Prison Service gave a speech to the Prison Service conference in which he outlined his view of the role of Governors which he divided into three areas set out by Bryans and Wilson thus:

Organizing the internal environment – covering aspects such as discipline and control, security, recruitment and leadership of staff, communications, maintenance and development of the prison and industrial relations.

Managing processes and outputs – budgets, setting and achieving targets, use of information, decision making, driving and controlling change, procurement, green issues and energy management and technical advice.

Managing the external environment – representing the prison to the public, working with other agencies, political sensitivity, media awareness, and alertness to changes in the wider community.

This is a long list and serves to underline, perhaps particularly due to its stark presentation, the complexity of the job facing Governors.

Others who have looked at the role of Governors have attempted to define it in terms of competencies. Bryans and Wilson do this, as does Bryans in a later paper (2000) and in his own Ph.D. research (Bryans, 2005). In 1996 the Prison Service adopted a core competence framework applicable to all levels of staff:

Security awareness;

Concern for prisoner care;

Rehabilitation oriented;

Systematic approach;

Planning and renewing;  
Organising and empowering;  
Team playing and networking;  
Team building and liaison;  
Motivation and commitment;  
Communicates clearly;  
Problem solving and continuous improvement;  
Leadership and decision making.

As Bryans and Wilson point out, most of these are applicable across organisations in general, the first three are prison specific. Managerial competencies required in other types of organisations and not specified in the Prison Service include customer focus and commercial awareness.

Bryans and Wilson argue that prisons are unique institutions, that they are, in Goffman's (1968) phrase, total institutions. However, unlike some of the total institutions that Goffman discussed – such as mental hospitals – prisons are increasing in number in the UK. Factors which make prisons unique include the compulsory detention of prisoners. Although individuals may be detained in mental hospitals this is not the case for the majority and there are mechanisms for appeal against detention that are not available to prisoners. Bryans and Wilson also suggest that there is a greater power disparity between prisoners and staff than there is between inmates and staff of other institutions – this is not the case for all psychiatric institutions. In some, levels of control and observation are very high and patients experience the same level of loss of liberty as prisoners.

Despite this reservation I agree that prisons are unlike other institutions. Part of this singularity stems from the continuing debate about the purpose of imprisonment, and which aspect of the multifaceted function of the prison should predominate. For some years now the emphasis has been on security and public safety, and rehabilitative work has been seen as part of this as prisons have attempted to reduce levels of reoffending. However a more punitive approach has resurfaced recently in the guise of putting more emphasis on the needs of the victims of crime.

Linked to the debate about the functions of prisons is another about appropriate styles of business organisation and management. Like much of the public sector the Prison Service has introduced 'managerialism' with its emphasis on measurable targets, process management and competition. In a paper focused more closely on Governors, Bryans (2000) attempted to answer two questions:

Who is governing prisons?

What competencies do they require to govern effectively?

To address the first of these he sent a postal survey to Governing Governors in England and Wales, attaining a 77% response rate. From the information received he drew up a profile of the 'typical' Governor.

The typical governor is, therefore, male, 50 years old, has been in the Prison Service for some twenty years and has been governing for the last six years. He would have joined the Prison Service as a second career on the direct entry assistant governor scheme. It would have taken him 18 years to progress through the ranks of assistant governor and then deputy governor prior to being appointed a governing Governor.

Moving to consider the competencies required by Governing Governors, Bryans divides these into four areas – general management, public sector management, incident command and prison management.

Looking first at general management Bryans makes the point that although the introduction of New Public Management (NPM) to the Prison Service during the late 1980s and early 1990s has affected the role of Governors, they were seen as general managers from the early 1970s. Raine and Willson (1997) identify three elements of NPM – fiscal prudence, standardisation and hierarchical organisational structures. Bryans states that Governors were never given a clear exposition of the meaning of the term 'general manager' and suggests that this reflects a general confusion which is also found in literature about the subject. For example, do general managers need to possess competency in all aspects of management, or do they need to have sufficient understanding to manage others who possess

that expertise without necessarily possessing the same level of knowledge themselves?

Bryans suggests that more recent theoretical work on general management is tending to focus on leadership aspects of the role encompassing elements such as vision, values, strategy and empowerment. From the conversations I had with Governors this would seem to be more in line with how they see themselves.

Moving on to public sector management Bryans argues that there are distinct elements to this which are not found in private sector settings despite tendencies to conflate the two. One of these elements, which has been mentioned previously, is an understanding of how government functions, required because public sector management has a strong political dimension. Governors need to be aware of the roles and accountability of Ministers within the Criminal Justice System. However, harking back to Jarzabkowski's remark quoted in the earlier section on the development of imprisonment, the often short-lived careers of ministers within government can cause frustration to those whose working lives are directly and intimately, and often rapidly, affected by changes in policy which may at times appear to be expeditious responses to political events rather than well-thought out approaches to strategic planning for a long-term service.

A second aspect of public sector management which Bryans raises in regard to Prison Governors is that of legality. Governors have to abide by the law in fulfilling their role and exercising their powers but they also have specific powers granted to them under the law and they must be aware of these and of their responsibilities in exercising them.

Third Bryans raises the question of stakeholders. He emphasises the complex make-up of the stakeholder group Prison Governors are held accountable to, commenting that 'few private sector managers have so many stakeholders to satisfy' (p23). Bryans sees in this a possible source of tension and conflict for Governors as they try to meet the possibly competing and conflicting demands of disparate groups, including some stakeholders, particularly amongst the prison inmate population who may

be unwilling participants in the processes of running the prison and may look out for ways to disrupt this.

Public sector managers have, therefore, to manage dissatisfaction to a much greater extent. Dissatisfaction may be caused by the allocation of resources or services, the quality of that service or by legal constraints placed upon the public sector manager in the exercising of their powers. Governors, in particular, need to be competent at managing dissatisfaction as seldom a day passes without the Governor having to make an unpopular decision, either with reference to staff or prisoners. (p23).

The next aspect of competence which Bryans considers is that of incident command. This is, fortunately, rarely needed but all Governors need to be able to assume a command role in a crisis. For an example of this see the scene entitled 'Losing the plot' where some of the Governors recount their experiences during a one day strike by Prison Officers. Other possible crises listed by Bryans include fires, riots, demonstrations, escapes, hostage taking, roof-top protests and gang fights. As Bryans points out this command role is not unique to Prison Governors but also forms part of the role of senior members of fire, ambulance and police services as well as coastguards, pilots, military officers and those employed in certain industries and whose work makes them responsible for the safety of numbers of people.

Bryans discusses the differences between management and command. Key amongst these is that while management may be consultative to different degrees command is more directive and rests largely on the judgement of a single individual. That person can be trained for the eventualities that will require the adoption of a command role but these events are likely to be rare so that most Governors can accrue little experience in dealing with such situations before finding themselves in a command situation. In many ways this would seem to be a fortunate situation but it may also mean that Governors who may previously have encountered crisis situations only in simulation are less-well prepared should they have to face the 'real thing'. Giving Governors experience in as wide a range of settings as possible and encouraging the sharing of experience can help in preparing them for the

possibility of having to deal with crises. For Governors there is an additional pressure in that, as already discussed, they work within a highly politicised service and one which is often subject to criticism.

For a detailed discussion of a notorious crisis within the Prison Service see Carrabine's (1998) in-depth study of the HMP Manchester (Strangeways) riot of 1990.

Bryans examines an aspect of management which is, by definition, unique to managers within the Prison Service – that of prison management competence. Bryans suggests that this is the most difficult part of the role of Governor to define. One could perhaps think of it as a particular kind of 'nous'. In attempting to give some definition Bryans refers to Woolf's three elements of Criminal Justice and suggests that balancing these three – security, control and justice – is a key feature of prison management competence. Bryans also refers to his earlier work with Wilson (2000), discussed earlier, to list other elements of the role of Governor.

Another particular facet of prison management that Bryans discusses is that of resource allocation. This becomes particularly apposite as prisons are facing major budget cuts and these have already affected prisoners with the introduction across most of the service of the standardised core day, which keeps prisoners in their cells for longer. Bryans comments that reductions in regime can have major repercussions, the suggestion being that this can lead to an increase in untoward incidents.

Additionally, Bryans discusses boundary management. Governors need to have an awareness of what is happening inside the prison as well as within the wider community. This aspect of the Governors' role is described in this study by Matthew as one of the major changes in moving from Deputy to Governing Governor.

Finally in this paper Bryans briefly considers the changing role of Governors, setting this within the context of the managerialist approach to governing prisons which he sees as having led to a reduction in the autonomy of Governors and in their ability to use their discretion. This change in managerial approach led to a revision of Governor training, moving away from what Bryans describes as a command course to generic

managerial training. Bryans suggests that some Governors find it difficult to reconcile a managerialist approach with the caring, reformative ethos which first attracted them to the work. Bryans suggests that there is confusion about the role of Governors within the present day Prison Service and that clarification is needed to allow Governors to work effectively. He also raises the issue of Governor well-being, which is one of the underlying considerations of this thesis.

Bryans makes some similar points in a shorter article also published in 2000 (Bryans 2000b) looking specifically at managerialism in the Prison Service. Bryans lists the guidelines, plans, vision, aims, objectives, principles, performance indicators, targets and standards that shape the working lives of Governors, many of which require the regular submission of information for the purpose of monitoring performance. These are backed up by regular visits from line managers and periodic audits by the Standards Audit Unit (SAU). Bryans comments 'There is no effective system in place at present to disseminate best practice identified during an audit, hence it is regarded as a very negative experience. In addition, the different approaches taken by the inspectorate and audit often result in an inconsistent picture being painted of an establishment.... The core business of the Prison Service is delivering in prisons, yet increasingly, thanks to the managerialist agenda, establishments are seen by some as serving the needs of Headquarters.' (p7). In this way, Bryans argues, managerialism becomes an end in itself, rather than a means towards the accomplishment of a task of service delivery. Bryans suggests that this focus on the achievement of time delimited targets encourages a detrimental short-termism and steers Governors away from longer-term vision and strategic planning. 'There is a grave danger that adopting a managerial approach to the running of prisons will ignore humanitarian, ethical and moral, principles and concerns.' (p8).

Writing for the same issue of Criminal Justice Matters that published Bryans' article just discussed and which focused on managerialism, David Wilson (2000) asks 'Whatever happened to 'The Governor'?' Wilson draws on Rutherford's (1994) three credos of criminal justice managers, suggesting that 'Credo Two – a pragmatic, managerial approach which does not look at the broad picture or the overall direction that is being taken by

the organization – is clearly in the ascendant.’ Wilson suggests that Credo Three practitioners, who were empathetic and optimistic in their attitude towards offenders and what could be achieved in working with them, were becoming harder to find. Like Bryans, Wilson argues in his short piece that prison Governors are unique amongst public sector managers with a philosophical attitude to their work which is now all too frequently subsumed in the day to day demands of apparently endless tasks designed to keep the machine moving, but not always keep it going anywhere.

In re-reading Bryans’ and Wilson’s articles I was reminded of a conversation I had with a Governor shortly after they were first published. I brought up the name of another Governor whose work seemed to me to exemplify the empathetic optimistic approach which Wilson mourns. I was told that he was “away with the fairies.”

Andrew Coyle (2007) gives a brief assessment of the role of Governors and the qualities needed to fulfill this role. He includes a quote from an article written in 1841 by Frederick Hill, one of the first independent inspectors of prisons, which I reproduce here in full because it remains relevant to the debate around the qualities needed to govern prisons and the role and function of prisons themselves.

The Governor of a large prison should be a person of strong native talent, and of great decision of character, yet of kind and affable manner; he should possess a great insight into human character and into the various causes of crime and the springs of action; and he should be influenced by a strong desire to promote the permanent welfare of the prisoners committed to his charge. He should be possessed of powers of command, and of holding others to responsibility; and in order to maintain these effectively, it is necessary that he should be able to determine what everyone under his authority can reasonably be expected to perform, and to judge the manner in which every duty is discharged. (Quoted in Coyle, 2007, p 498)

Coyle divides the role of Governor into two aspects – leadership and management. Sets of keys within prisons are numbered and the Governing

Governor will hold set number 1 – leading to the use of the expression ‘Number One’ Governor. Coyle suggests that this is not merely a prison colloquialism but reflects the responsibility of the post within the prison. He writes that it is the role of the Governor to ‘set the tone’ (p511) of the prison. He or she needs, in Coyle’s view, a certain amount of charisma to inspire trust and confidence but this ‘must not degenerate into idiosyncrasy’. Coyle’s view of a Governor as leader is of someone who develops a vision and lays down parameters and then encourages and facilitates staff to use their initiative in working within those parameters, being willing to take the risks that this involves.

In terms of management Coyle suggests that the idea of Governors as managers is a comparatively recent phenomenon. This fits with the militaristic model of leadership which formerly held sway in the Service. As managers, Governors require a wide range of skills; Coyle lists some of these as strategic planning, personnel, finance and budgeting. Additionally Governors have to operate on a number of platforms: inside the prison they have to be able to form relationships with prisoners and all grades of staff, outside they have to do so with numerous bodies from local community groups to senior politicians, families to dignitaries of various ilk.

Governors have to ensure that things get done, but they are additionally responsible for the decency of the prison – for the ethical and moral conditions that prevail. Coyle reminds his readers that management is a means to an end (the ‘end’ for prisons seems to be subject to constant debate and change) not an end in itself, although he suggests that the adoption of managerialist practice in the Prison Service has, indeed, led to management becoming somewhat of an end in itself with an over concentration on processes and outputs.

A contributed chapter by Shane Bryans (2008) covers many of the points raised in his earlier writings which I have already discussed, focusing on managerialism and emphasising the increasing complexity of the role of Governing Governors. Bryans quotes from a Governor who expresses the at times bewildering complexity of the job extremely well.

I think it's more complex, less clear in its aims, contradictory in some areas so that you are facing often in more directions than you've got faces. That gives it a bit of uniqueness and I think that's to some extent too because of the lack of clarity in that and I don't think it can be clarified. I think it's intrinsically complex and contradictory and, because of that, you're doing much more as a governor. People look to you as the governor to put it all into context, to explain things and to put the pieces of the jigsaw together. (Bryans, 2008, p244)

The final, and major, piece of research in this short review of research and writing on Governors and governing is Shane Bryans' Ph.D. thesis, submitted in 2005 and subsequently published in 2007.

Bryans interviewed 42 Governing Governors using a structured format and covering a wide range of topics; additionally he interviewed ten stakeholders including Area Managers, Headquarters staff and directors of private prisons. Several research questions form the foundation of his study:

Who governs our prisons and why do they do the job?

What do Governors do?

How has the environment in which Governors operate changed and what is the reality of governing?

Are Governors more or less disposed to use their own discretion in support of centrally prescribed policy and guidelines, and to what extent are Governors able to deviate from policy?

Have the roles and duties of a Governor fundamentally changed?

Two things strike me about these questions: the first is that some of them are complex, covering two or more areas; the second is that they are very ambitious – each of them could be a research study in its own right. I suspect this is one of the pitfalls of Ph.D. research, we think we have to do something big. I felt the same looking at Bryans' interview schedule which fills nine pages of his thesis and is divided into thirteen sections with some 75 questions – a very demanding schedule for both interviewer and respondents. The thesis continues and builds upon Bryans' earlier work looking at Governors so rather than describing and discussing it in detail I

will look at the recommendations that Bryans makes and consider how his work relates to my own study.

Bryans makes six recommendations in closing his thesis (p288 –9):

*Clarification of expectations.* Bryans suggests that recent changes in the role of Governors have led to confusion as to what is expected of Governors. This is compounded by rules, regulations, orders and instructions that are supposed to guide Governors in their work. In one Governor's office I noticed a shelf of files with labels such as 'prison orders' and asked if he was supposed to know the contents. 'I believe so,' he replied. Bryans argues that there needs to be clarification of this welter of material to give Governors, and other stakeholders, a clear idea of what is expected of them and that this should be underpinned with a standard job description.

*Time in post.* As discussed elsewhere in this thesis, many Governors spend a comparatively short time in post before moving on. Bryans suggests that at least three years is needed to assess the need for change, to develop and implement changes and to embed them in the culture of the prison. Bryans suggests that the Prison Service needs to encourage Governors to remain in post and to offer incentives for this.

*Contributing to policy formulation.* Bryans reports that Governors feel unable to influence policy. He argues that this leads to Governors not implementing policy as intended and suggests that involving Governors in policy formulation would create 'like mindedness' and thus reduce the gap between policy as intended and as implemented. Bryans does not explicitly say so, but in addition to creating shared understanding, involving Governors in policy formulation could also serve to reduce resentment at the seeming imposition of policies they have taken no part in developing and may feel are not appropriate to their particular situation.

*Training.* Much of the knowledge that Governors apply to their work is acquired in what Bryans describes as an apprenticeship situation in which Governors can learn elements of 'jailcraft'. In other words Governors learn by observing Governors and other managers they work with as they go through their careers. However, each Governor has an individual and

unique career path and there is no guarantee that they will learn all that they need, or that they will learn best, or even good, practice. Bryans suggests that the Prison Service should take steps to facilitate Governors' learning of what might be considered as the more esoteric aspects of their job.

*Applying academic research.* Bryans points to the need to disseminate research findings effectively suggesting that this will 'help establish a written tradition of learning, which currently does not exist amongst Governors.' Such research would need to be of apparent relevance, and clearly and succinctly presented otherwise it is unlikely that Governors would have either the time or the inclination to read it. Having said that, all the Governors who participated in my study were interested in both the process of my research and in seeing what came out of it. Independent academic research may carry a particular legitimacy that research from inside the Prison Service does not possess (having no axe to grind) and this can act as a 'selling point' although staff could take the view that outside academics do not understand prison culture and the 'realities' of prison. This argues for a combination of internal and external research to build up a strong mix of complementary ideas and viewpoints.

*Stress amongst Governors.* Bryans writes that Governors are experiencing more stress due to the increased complexity of their role and the greater demands placed upon them from factors such as competing priorities and performance management requirements. Additionally Governors may experience stress when the demands of the role conflict with either their personal values and ideology or what they perceive those of their role within the Prison Service to be. Bryans suggests that the Prison Service should exercise a duty of care towards Governors by monitoring stress levels and offering support. This is a key element in my research which places a particular emphasis on issues around Governors' well-being.

Bryans also makes some suggestions for further research. He suggests that more research in the same model as his would be of value as this could develop into longitudinal research which could evaluate Governors' perceptions over time and against the backdrop of changes in the Prison Service and in the wider criminal justice system. This is something I was

conscious of in carrying out my own research and I will return to it later when I come to consider my ideas for further research.

Bryans also recommends the use of other research methods such as participant observation and work diaries to obtain a broader picture of Governors' work experiences. My thesis, written by someone with no experience of working in the Prison Service but with some background knowledge and understanding contributes to this by offering an outsider's perspective on Governors' experiences and views.

Finally Bryans raises some areas that have not been covered, or have only been touched on, in his study and suggests these as possible future topics for research. These include situational and environmental impacts on Governors' work; the role of the Senior Management Team; gender; the relationship between a Governor's ability and the performance of his or her prison. All of these highlight the fact that this is a very new area of research with a great deal still to do. As I finish writing this section in January 2010 I know of three other Ph.D. research projects currently being undertaken – there may be more. These three are: Jamie Bennett's ethnographic study of agency and structure in Governors' working lives 'in particular exploring issues about how managers understand and experience structure such as performance management, how they exercise and constrain their own agency through issues such as discretion, resistance, etc., and also looks at where these intersect, particularly in culture and identity.' (personal communication). As Bennett's ethnographic work focuses on the management teams within two medium security prisons it fits well with Bryans' assessment of research needs; Assanee Sangkhanate's study of reform of prison management and Alison Bain's principally quantitative research into 'the impact of leadership on the rehabilitation culture of prisons and whether a coaching culture would improve prison effectiveness in both security and reduction in offending.' (personal communication). Alison is a former Prison Service psychologist who was involved in the Optimising Potential programme which Governors took part in and which is discussed later. Her focus on the rehabilitation culture of prisons is particularly interesting at a time when recent Government comments on imprisonment have emphasised a punitive function.

Having set a context for my research by looking at the development of imprisonment and the role of Governors; imprisonment in the context of the Labour governments of 1997 to 2010 and recent research on Prison Governors I now present my own research, beginning with a prologue.

## **Prologue**

This Ph.D. represents a move in my thinking from wanting to ‘find out’ about the working lives of Prison Governors to wanting to understand and to empathise and to enable others to do that as they read my thesis and reflect upon their reading. As such an enquiring, observational and analytical process, although all those things are still in here, became additionally a creative and imaginative one. This is not to say that research does not normally seek to understand and to empathise, but that, for me, there has been a shift along that line as I have spent more time with the Governors I met and as I have read about different approaches to research and brought in interests and approaches from other areas, particularly drama and creative writing.

This has led me, by a fairly circuitous route, to adopt a particular way of looking at, and writing about, the material I have gathered over the period of reading, writing, thinking and, most importantly, questioning and listening that has preceded this final period of construction and writing that will, I hope, produce a coherent and engaging whole.

I decided some time ago that I wanted the thoughts and opinions of my Governors to form the central part of my thesis. It took me a long time to work out how I was going to do this. I had felt for a long time that I did not want to write what I thought of as a conventionally structured thesis – it did not seem appropriate for what I was trying to do. And I did not wish to portray myself as expert on the subject of Prison Governors, or on governing prisons. Because I’m not, it’s a job that I find fascinating, and one that I know I could not do. I had some research questions when I started, which I set out later in the thesis, but the real questions are ‘What is it like?’ and ‘Why do you do it?’ Or, from a different angle, ‘Who becomes a Prison Governor?’ and ‘How does being a Governor affect them?’ Having decided against a conventionally structured thesis I had to come up with a more suitable way of presenting the material. I also had to weigh up the risks I might be taking. I’d just got an idea of what a Ph.D. looks like (several ticks in the I-Spy Book of Ph.D.s) and then I wanted to throw that away. It felt quite scary, but very, very exciting.

So, what you are about to read is what I came up with as a way of representing the time that I spent in conversation with nine Prison Governors working in public sector prisons in England and Wales.

I start by interviewing myself as a way of introducing the thesis and beginning to explain the whys and hows of my project. This is followed by a commentary on the interview which expands on the topics I mention there and brings in the literature and ideas that have formed the background to my work, as well as issues of methodology and method. Then I introduce my cast – ‘my’ Governors, and myself as the researcher. Then there are the ‘scenes’, each of which relates to an aspect of the Governors’ work and is made up of a collage, or patchwork, of extracts from the conversations I had with Governors. Each of these is followed by a short imaginative piece in which I try, after reflecting on what the Governors have said, to put myself in similar shoes. Like the self interviews I use, these were dictated using speech recognition software (Dragon and MacSpeech). I was unsure as to whether to leave these in the body of the thesis or add them as appendices, but I feel they serve as a reminder that all the material from interviews and conversations that I use has been subject to several levels of filtering. These are followed by my commentaries, in which I look in depth at the material presented in each scene, in the context of my research themes and approaches.

As an ESRC funded Ph.D. this thesis also represents my training and development as a researcher and as such I reflect on things which affected my thinking and practice as I went through this process and try to make the ‘evolution’ of the work quite transparent.

## **What am I doing here? Interview with myself**

### **Why were you interested in doing this research?**

Initially, it grew out of some work that I'd been doing for the Prison Governors' Association, and I'd just developed an interest in, in prison Governors as a group of people in a particular work environment, and the fact that the Governing Governors are a very small group who share a lot in common, but also work in very different contexts, and in very different ways. There was also for me the issue of whether there was conflict between different aspects of the role that they played. I've had a long-time interest in ideas of people performing different roles in different situations, and I was interested in that in the context of Governors. But thinking about it, it goes back quite a lot further as an interest. I came across the work of people like Goffman and also Berger and Luckmann fairly young as my mum read them when I was in my early teens and I came across them in the bookcase and read quite a lot Goffman and I read Social Construction of Reality. I didn't remember very much about it but the title of that book stuck with me and I think that's informed my thinking. How over the past, must be nearly 40 years since I first read it, and Goffman, I read and re-read various of his works, over the years. I read them out of interest initially and then doing a psychology degree and before that training as a nurse as well. They were relevant, work on Asylums, working in a mental handicap hospital in the 1970s. That was all interesting, and Goffman's work on Presentation of the Self and again, this dramatic idea of role play I've always found very interesting.

### **What is your overall approach to the research?**

Well I'm very much a social constructionist, in my more off the wall moments I could quite easily believe that I am a figment of someone's imagination, but most of the time, I don't think that but I certainly think that social reality is constructed as a process. I find it hard to accept the notion that there is an objective social reality out there, because I think it is constantly interpreted and created by individuals. I know at a very personal level I live in a world that is quite different to the one that my husband inhabits. And you compromise with the people around you to kind of create something that you can share I suppose, so that sort of, that attitude has

informed, the way I do things but also I'm, I wouldn't say a strong feminist, or an extreme feminist, but I am quite definitely feminist in my outlook and a lot of the sort of values of feminist research are very important to me, things like reciprocity and, a kind of, I suppose, caring attitude in what you do that I don't think is necessarily a feminist thing, but it's part of feminist research approaches.

### **How did you decide which Governors to approach?**

I used what's known as purposive sampling which is really about trying to contact people that you know you will get good information from which actually of course means anybody is who is willing to talk to you in this context, because if you want to know about Prison Governors you ask Prison Governors and they all know what it's like to do their own job. So there wasn't really any selection from me on that point, it was the Governors who in the end made that selection as to whether they were willing to talk to me. So, a lot of it was simply down to trying to be reasonably representative and also the practicalities of working on a limited budget, and with limited time amongst, you know, a nationwide population, where everybody had to be seen somewhere different. So what I actually did was to draw up a table of Prison Governors that looked at types of prison, Governors' gender, so I got a fairly representative sample of male and female governors, and then I had to look at where they were and which I could get to so I ended up with a fairly sort of geographically spaced collection, but they were all ones I could reach either from my own home or the homes of members of my family so that I could go and stay, although in some cases I didn't actually, I didn't end up going and staying with members of my family because it was easier just to go directly wherever they were and stay in a cheap hotel or not so cheap hotel sometimes. But I ended up with some 15 prisons, which I approached and out of that eight Governors agreed to take part in the study, so I do have a sample that covers most types of prison. What I don't have is anybody who is governing a high security prison. I do have several people who have worked in high security at fairly high levels. So there isn't input from someone who is working there but there are people who have talked about that.

### **How did you go about gaining permission to do the research?**

That was fairly simple. As a national study I had to apply to Prison Service headquarters for permission and I had to make certain commitments with regard to confidentiality and giving the Prison Service approval for anything I was proposing to publish and also to liaise with a particular person at Prison Service headquarters. But it was a relatively quick and simple process. I submitted my university ethics forms, which again were quite simple, because Prison Governors are not perceived as a vulnerable group. In fact the health and safety form I had to fill in was much, much longer because it was a generic one so it was designed for geologists and geographers who might run the risk of rocks falling on their heads rather than someone who was going to sit in a comfortable office and chat for an hour.

### **What ethical implications and concerns are there?**

This has actually been quite an interesting thing because this has developed as more of an issue as I've gone out and had more conversations with the Governors simply because of the things that they raise and because they are such a small population and I've given a commitment to anonymity. There are things in the interviews that if I want to use them I will have to be very careful, because they may make people identifiable, but I think if you are determined to work out who everybody is then you could probably do it and the Governors in the study themselves largely know who each other is partly because having said it had to be confidential the Prison Service then sent out a letter to everybody that listed all the prisons that I had permission to contact and partly because the Governors know each other and some of them talked about it amongst themselves. So some of them know that they've all been part, they're all part of my study. But that that's their choice that is not something that I've done. And there have been a few things, [deleted] and they've stressed that that is confidential and things I won't, I wouldn't put in the study, partly because it's not relevant and partly because I don't want to risk breaching a level of confidentiality that goes beyond what I'm doing. I mean I appreciate very much the level of trust that people have put in, in what they said, and in trusting me to deal sensitively with the data that I get.

### **Are there any particular ways of doing research and interpreting information that you have used or been influenced by?**

I mentioned before the idea of doing reflexive research, and seeing myself as part of the process and the fact that it's me doing the research I think has an effect on what I get. In fact, I discussed this at one point with one of the Governors, and he felt that, you know, definitely there were things that he, and he felt his colleagues, would say to me that they might not say to another researcher. An example is there was a Ph.D. completed in 2005 by a former Prison Governor and he had a feeling that, as Shane was a Prison Governor when he did his research, he might not have said things to him that he might say to someone from outside the service because at some time he might find himself in competition for a job or something, and there is a sort of thing about not revealing too much to someone who might actually not so much threaten but, you know, they are in the system and you don't know where it might go I suppose. And the other big influence, is the interpretivist view approach to research.

### **How did you go about carrying out the interviews?**

They were semi-structured; initially I produced an idiot list of questions. I started very much with background stuff about why people had joined the Prison Service and how they got to be Prison Governors. What it was like when they made the transition to Governing Governor? And I asked everybody those same kinds of questions. And then each interview had a theme, so that the first interview as I said was background. The second looked at training and development issues. The third looked at leadership and management and the fourth was a summary and also looking at the idea of making a difference both in terms of what the Governors were doing and what I might do with this research and to basically ask what would be your wish list? But within that also obviously there were changes going on within the Prison Service. I mean the various reports that came out: the Corston Report, the Carter Report, the five-year plan for criminal justice. The Home Office was split and the Ministry of Justice was developed right towards the end of my main interview period. There was a kind of reinvention of the National Offender Management System. There was industrial action. And population increases. So all those things that are

significant events as well, we discussed, and they fed into the research. Also particular issues within prisons on things around security, around structural development, issues that affected the Prison Service as a whole. A big one was budget cuts that prisons are having to make nationally. Industrial relations. How these things actually affected individual prisons and Governors. I was actually very, very lucky because the Governors were very forthcoming, they were very easy to hold conversations with. Which I think is very good, and it was, it was an absolute pleasure.

**You chose to interview in a particular pattern. Why was that?**

Oh, it comes out of the interpretivist framework, that I was looking for depth, and so I was keen to follow a group of Governors over a period so that I could see, even if only in a small way, how things develop and we could revisit topics over that period. Most of the Governors I saw were in their first in-charge posting and they were very new when I first saw them, although some had, well they all had, a lot of experience and some had a great deal of previous experience that they could draw on. But I just thought it was important rather than just sort of taking a snapshot, and interviewing a lot of people only once, to have a sort of ‘over time’ element in the research as well and I also, by repeatedly seeing the same people, it meant that if one person raised a topic I could then raise that with other people as well or bring it in when I was talking to sort of develop a conversation. So, you know, someone might have talked about budgets and then in another interview with a different Governor where we were talking about budgets I could say ‘one of your colleagues said’, whatever they said and get them to comment on what the first person had said. And that was quite useful as well and I think it expands the material that I have got.

**How is your research different from earlier work in this area?**

Well there isn't that much earlier work in the area. Shane Bryans, who's Ph.D. I mentioned earlier, has co written a book about prison Governors. But that is very much a sort of descriptive, more general than analytical book. There are some short chapters, in other books about prison Governors and Shane Bryans and David Wilson have both produced some papers about it and there are a couple of other people doing Ph.D.s now about

Prison Governors, but they are doing them within the context of a law school so, I'll know more about it when I've contacted them, but I imagine that their approach is somewhat different to mine which fits somewhere sort of at the boundaries of social science, social policy and organisational and business studies.

I think the approach that I've taken both in terms of the way that I've chosen to interview people and also that I'm looking at Prison Governors as an example of performance and role play within a framework of leadership and management is a different approach. I certainly haven't come across that way of combining things, and also the way that I'm trying to treat my data by trying to foreground, or at least equalise what the, the role of the Governors and the role of myself as researcher. I was very much aware that I was asking for something from them, that they were the experts, and I also felt, reading about interpreting the data that we've created, that I didn't want to put myself in a position of being an expert. It is very much a learning process for me and I have certain skills that I can bring to it. But I wanted to avoid the situation, where I would make a comment and then bring in something out of context from a Governor to support it and I also wanted to echo in the way I wrote about it the idea of performance, so I came up with this idea of trying to create scenes that retained the meaning, and the authenticity of the Governors' words, but enabled me to put them together and make, not quite a dialogue, well no, it wouldn't be a dialogue, not quite a conversation between the Governors. But something that approached that, that could then be the first thing that a reader would come across on each topic and to do that I used indexing software, and I did a minute by minute summary of each interview and then indexed that. So I knew down to a minute where everything was so the indexing was a way of managing the data, and then I would select a particular topic, I mean, I had got an idea for things that I knew I wanted in. I was focusing on roles and relationships and I knew that was important, and also things that seem to come out as important to the Governors themselves and that I had felt in the interviews were important, um, so I put those together, as I say the indexing meant I could find those bits quite easily, and I constructed these what I call scenes. And then, as part of trying to get closer to the data after I'd read the scenes

and thought about them I then just sat and tried to write something about that topic as though I were a Governor so sort of a fictitious answer to one of my own questions as it were, as if I were a Governor, which was part, as I say, of the process of trying to engage as closely as I could with what people have said, and I did send one of those to the performative sociology list for comments and people were very positive about it so I thought ‘Oh yes this is working,’ and then I wrote a commentary, where I looked in depth at each scene bearing in mind the initial questions that I had relating around performance and role and role conflict. And the initial research questions that I came up with when I wrote my original proposal, which did focus on role and tension within a particular, within the job of being a Prison Governor and within a changing environment, because change is a big issue within prisons and that’s in part why I decided to start the thesis with an interview with myself. Because I had originally planned to write a prologue, but in a way it seemed unfair and inappropriate to me to start off with a very, very polished prologue, and then present Governors talking off the cuff and very openly about their experiences and how they felt about things and I thought well, I’d actually like to start with something less structured and less polished from me so I wrote down a list of questions, and here I am answering them.

### **What is the point of your research?**

Well it’s partly about me getting a Ph.D., which is something I’ve wanted to do for a long time, it’s been a longtime ambition of mine, but obviously I couldn’t in all conscience ask people to give up their time just so that I could get Ph.D.. If that was my interest then I should have done something library based that was less intrusive, so I do very much hope that the Governors who’ve taken part got something out of it both in terms of a personal thing that they’ve enjoyed doing it and that they found a useful exercise sitting down and having a conversation with someone who isn’t part of the Prison Service, but is genuinely interested in them and in what they do, and also I hope that it will go on and provide some useful information for appropriate sectors of the Prison Service. I’m not sure how reflexive the Prison Service is overall, but I think that any well researched,

as I hope this will prove to be, project that they can draw on is likely to be useful, and I think it does raise issues that are important in terms of management and organisation and leadership and how you work with people and how you can be, your organisational practices can be either obstructive or facilitative. So I hope that in that sense, you know, I will manage to disseminate it to people who will at least read the summary bits even if they're not interested in the detail of how I did it and that it will provoke thought and feed into management practice and policy. That would be my big hope.

## **Self interview commentary**

I interviewed myself because I wanted to give an introduction to my thesis that would explain what I was doing and why. I had originally planned to write a longer prologue but I felt that it was unbalanced to have a relatively polished piece of prose to represent my contribution while the Governors were talking in an unrehearsed way. Doing this also gave me some insight into the experience of being put ‘on the spot’. I did not prepare answers for the interview. I drew up a list of questions and sat and answered them straight through. I used voice recognition software (Dragon Naturally Speaking) to transcribe as I spoke, and made a recording on my digital recorder so that I could then go through and check as the voice recognition software can be idiosyncratic at times.

I shall now comment and elaborate upon the answers I gave to each of the interview questions that I asked myself.

### **Why were you interested in doing this research?**

This study developed out of a two year period spent working as a researcher for the Prison Governors’ Association (PGA). During this time I was able to meet a number of Governors, of all grades, at meetings and conferences or informally over meals. I was able to talk with them and ask questions and hear their stories of their working lives. I worked closely with the then President of the PGA and from him, and the other Governors I met, I heard about the experiences, frustrations, hopes and visions of working Governors. In addition to my own impressions from these early conversations with Governors the historical review and discussions of earlier research previously presented suggest that there are issues which arise from the competing and uncertain demands of the different roles that Governors are expected to fulfil. This research aims to explore some of these issues through a series of in-depth conversations with a number of Governors and to work, with members of this group, towards developing ideas for ameliorating some of them.

Prior to taking up my job with the PGA I knew little, and had thought little, about Criminal Justice in general or about prisons and society’s responses to those considered wrongdoers in particular. I soon became fascinated.

Much of what I learnt resonated with my own experiences as a learning disabilities nurse during the 1970s and 1980s – a period of change which saw the introduction of business management techniques and the closure of most of the large learning disability and mental illness hospitals. However, prisons seemed even more interesting and complex than those institutions.

Like the now defunct hospitals, prisons vary in size, the smallest ones housing 100 or so prisoners, the largest in excess of 1,000. This means that, taking staff and prisoners together, the Governing Governors of these large prisons are to some extent responsible for as many people as live in the small market town where I live. It is quite an exercise to try to imagine the 2000 or so people of this grey stone town, with all their different personalities, occupations, beliefs, interests and attitudes transposed to a single confining institution where liberty is restricted for everyone, though to varying degrees. The Governors who took part in my study work in prisons that range in size from relatively small – housing from just over 200 prisoners, to housing nearly 1,000; several of them were enlarged during the course of my research in response to rising numbers. The Governors all work in different environments, with different groups of prisoners and staff and need to take different approaches to their work. At the same time, there are elements of their jobs that are standardised, such as key targets and other quantifiable performance indicators.

As I have written, a number of Governors told me stories during my two years with the PGA. Stories about why they had joined the Prison Service, why they stayed, what it felt like, what was good, and what could be better. Things they had done that they were proud of, and how they felt about the prisoners and staff in their care and about the organisation that employed them. One in particular told me about a very bad experience he had had of victimisation within the service. This episode is discussed by former Chief Inspector of Prisons, Sir David Ramsbotham in his book *Prisongate* (2003).

My job was to carry out research for the PGA president so that he could present well-informed arguments on behalf of the Association. At the time of my involvement the PGA was the representative professional organisation for the majority of Governor grade staff in England, Wales and

Northern Ireland and was developing a role as a campaigning organisation with a commitment to involvement in policy formation. This dual role was not entirely uncontentious, as some Governors felt that policy and practice development fell outside the remit of the PGA. (Funding for my post was not continued after the initial two year appointment – and following a change of Director General – and I was told that this was because my role was considered to be political and that it was therefore inappropriate for the Prison Service to fund it. During this time my boss and I had never discussed politics in any way and though I knew him then as a deeply humane man who commanded considerable respect I had, and still have, after years of friendship, no idea of his political views.) I carried out research into many diverse areas including industrial relations, offender health, race and diversity, human rights, and the extent and possible effects of overcrowding.

### **What is your overall approach to the research?**

The basic premise to my research is that Governors know about governing prisons. The longer they do it, the more they know. They know what it is like; they know what they have to do day by day, week by week, month by month. They know the rewards, frustrations and risks of the job. Reading around can help me understand and contextualise but the most important thing I have had to do is listen. To do what St Just, quoted in Sanderson (2008), referred to as ‘showing up, shutting up, tuning in and getting what’s going on.’

I will never ‘know’ what it is like to govern a prison, but I can hope to develop understanding and empathy. I can try my best to think myself into the role, but that is as far as I can go. And, until they actually do it that is as much as Governors have been able to do. The knowledge/insight that I acquired during the course of this research is not the living knowledge of the Governors themselves. However, each Governor has had a different experience based on a complex interaction of factors: background, experience, personality, relationships, aptitudes, type of prison, training and preparation, personal morality, skills, etc. By spending time and talking with and listening to a number of Governors, and seeing most of them several times. I have been able to get an idea, albeit a sketchy one, about

how their experience of governing has changed over time and with events in the life of the prison and the wider context of the Prison Service and society in general. I have been able to refer to other viewpoints that other Governors have expressed and to raise my own ideas and conjectures. Thus in a way I have been a conduit to sharing ideas and this has helped me to build up my own image, which has both depth and breadth.

This image has also been developed in the context of the reading I have done and the viewpoint which I brought to the research myself. One feature of qualitative approaches to research that I particularly value is its acceptance of the role of the researcher and her subjectivity. Researchers' interests define the area of study and the methods used to answer research questions. In my own case, the way I undertook this project was bounded by my own interests and aptitudes – if I had been unable to do this project in a way that I found interesting and felt comfortable with I would have been unlikely to invest the necessary time and effort to undertake it. Similarly I do not feel that it is possible to remove the influence of the researcher from the project. This was made clear to me in this particular project when one of the Governors – John – commented that he was willing to say things to me that he would not have said to another Governor who also carried out interview based research with Governing Governors for his Ph.D. (Bryans, 2005). Bryans offers another perspective on this question suggesting that:

Interviewees tended not to be threatened by me, as a practitioner-researcher, because I was considered to be 'one of them'... Interviewees clearly perceived at least a moderate degree of empathy coming from me due to my status as Governor. This may have made them more willing to be honest and frank about their experiences...

Throughout the research my reading has been guided by the interviews with the Governors. Thus, although I initially started with an interest in the ideas of role play and dramatic presentation, as I talked with the Governors and listened to what they had to say I found myself developing new areas of interest and finding new areas of relevance, particularly in management and organisational studies. I felt strongly from the beginning of the study that,

although role and drama could provide a helpful framework for my understanding of the material I collected and created, and reflect an interest of mine, I did not want to mould the Governors' words to fit into a particular theoretical framework. Nor did I want to 'force' the Governors to give me certain information. My aim was to collect pieces, and to build a pattern or a picture from those collected pieces, rather than to design a pattern and then create the pieces to fit. As I listened to the Governors, and read and re-read the interviews and my notes and listened to them over and over again and thought and read other material I found that some ways of framing interpretation seemed to make more sense in this particular context than others and were more appealing to me as a researcher.

In the latter stages of the project, when I was undertaking more freelance work after my period of full-time studentship had ended, I came across a large amount of material by chance through books I was asked to index. I would jot down interesting snippets on post-it notes and stick them to the side of my computer for future reference. It was by this means that I initially encountered two of the texts that I have used in this work – those by Kempster (2009) and by Brun and Cooper (2009) as well as several others which have been less significant but have exerted an influence or introduced me to material I might not otherwise have encountered, particularly the work of Iain Mangham and Michael Overington which helped greatly in clarifying my thoughts on performance.

### **How did you decide which Governors to approach?**

One of the early decisions I had to make was about the scope of the research. In particular who was I going to refer to when I used the term 'Prison Governor' within the context of the research. There were several options: I could approach Governors at all levels of the managerial scale. It seemed, however, that in what would of necessity be quite a small project I probably could not work with enough people at each level to make this a useful approach. Also the wide range of job descriptions received in the responses to the PGA Survey (2002) suggested that the group as a whole was too diverse for this approach to be productive.

A second possible strategy was to study management teams at several different prisons. Again I felt that within the limits of time and resources available this would not be a productive strategy. I was also concerned about the possibility of the research being overly intrusive, that if I was hanging around, or ‘soaking and poking’ as DiIulio (1987) has described it, I might get under peoples’ feet and become a nuisance. Having said that, this approach has been used by prison researchers to very good effect (DiIulio, 1987; Crawley, 2004; and Gaskell, 1997, who took on a particular role in her participant-observer study of change in Hull prison).

I therefore decided to study the most clearly delineated group within the establishment management hierarchy – the Governing Governors. Governing Governors do not, however, form a homogenous group. As I point out in the prologue, while they will all share certain features, such as having been assessed as ‘suitable to be in charge’ there is a definite hierarchy of posts at this level and different posts are seen as requiring different levels of experience and expertise such that only relatively few Governing Governors are actually Governors grade A – the highest grade. During the course of the study some Governor posts were re-graded to eliminate anomalies in the grading structure.

Having decided which group to focus on I next needed to develop a strategy for deciding which Governors to invite to be in the study. I adopted a purposive approach to sampling (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998; Coyne, 1996) in that my aim in selecting a sample was to approach ‘information rich’ participants (Patton, 2001) – although for the purposes of my study any Governor who was willing to talk with me was likely to fulfil this criterion. I wished to approach a reasonably representative sample with regard to gender of Governors and types of prison. I did not have information available to enable me to sample on the basis of other potentially important factors such as years of experience or age.

A further practical criterion was accessibility. My resources were limited and I therefore hoped to be able to build my group of participants from prisons that were easily accessible from my own home, or from homes of family and friends. In deciding which Governors to approach I considered

including some I had already met and about whom I felt fairly confident that they would be willing to participate in the study. However, I decided that unless they came within my initial criteria I would not approach them – they could be held ‘in reserve’ in case I had difficulty recruiting a large enough cohort.

I created a table on which prisons were grouped by principal function (some prisons are multi-function), derived from the monthly prison population tables published by the Prison Service and information from the Prison Service website ([www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk](http://www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk)), together with my assessment of how easy or difficult each would be for me to reach using four categories: local; near family or friends; distant but okay to get to; and poor access. This was based on information on the Prison Service website. The majority of prisons fell into my ‘poor access’ category – this category included those requiring long journeys with changes of train; those with no public transport access or long (one hour or more) bus journeys from the nearest rail station. My journeys to some prisons made me aware of the difficulties faced by families and friends in visiting prisoners and maintaining relationships. Once I had created this table I highlighted those prisons which, according to the Prison Service website, had female Governing Governors (this website is not always reliable, as updating tends to be spasmodic). Using this table I then selected a group of prisons for initial contact.

### **How did you go about gaining permission to do the research?**

Before I could contact any potential participants I had to obtain permission from Her Majesty’s Prison Service to carry out the research. As my research was not limited to one prison, or one Prison Service region, I had to apply through Prison Service headquarters. This process involved filling in a form giving details of the project and its likely demands on the prisons involved in terms of time and other resources, and any benefit to the service. This was submitted together with copies of my Durham University ethics and health and safety forms and a brief CV. I was subsequently asked to send copies of my introductory letter, consent form and withdrawal form and to inform the Prison Service which prisons I hoped to work in. Within a few weeks I had received the necessary permission, subject to my

emphasising to Governors that they were free to withdraw at any time, and another condition detailed below, and the areas and prisons I initially hoped to work in had been notified by Headquarters of my project. I then enquired about obtaining security clearance. However, after an exchange of correspondence with a member of Headquarters staff I was told that I did not need security clearance. (I had, in fact, already gone through security clearance when working for the PGA.)

Once permission had been received from Prison Service headquarters I was able to contact individual Governors to invite them to join the research. One Governor contacted me to express an interest in taking part. I composed a letter giving details of the nature and purpose of the research and the part I hoped the Governors would play in it, together with an estimate of the likely time commitment. I also wrote a little about myself and gave the names and contact details of my supervisors. This was sent out with a consent form. Despite the fact that Headquarters had indicated that they were writing to Governors at the prisons I wished to visit a number asked for copies of my permission letter and I subsequently included this with my letters. I soon found that there were some inaccuracies on the website in that a number of prisons had changed Governors. In some cases Governors who had moved prisons indicated that they would like to take part in the study, while in others the new Governors were willing to do so. Some Governors who had recently taken up post felt that they were not able to commit to the study and some passed my request to local or area research co-ordinators, despite the fact that I had already received permission. I found this frustrating. None of these Governors took part in the research. I ended up with an initial group of eight and decided to start working with this group and review the size of the cohort in the light of the material created in working with them. One Governor, Ruth, joined later in the study having taken over from one of the original members.

As part of my agreement with HMPS to carry out my research I was required to liaise with a senior member of Prison Service staff whose role is the development of a leadership strategy and framework for delivery. She had recently been confirmed in this post after a period of acting up. We had

an initial meeting at Prison Service Headquarters in April 2006. As I had been told that the reason for this liaison was to maximise the usefulness of my research to the Service I was a little apprehensive as to whether there might be an attempt to hijack my project and turn it into a piece of work for the Prison Service. As it turned out my worries were completely unfounded. After an initial discussion about my project and how it might fit in with the aims of the Prison Service, and with other work being undertaken we carried on to talk about the developing role of Prison Governors. This discussion raised a number of points that are interesting, and relevant to the research:

That the role of Governing Governors is changing.

The use of development grids in managing the professional development of senior managers looking at skills, knowledge, aptitudes and experience.

Succession planning and managed moves between establishments. These can be a source of apprehension and discontent and it was suggested that greater transparency is needed (Hansard, 10/5/2006).

Specific competency requirements for Governors, such as data analysis skills and how these might be provided.

A change of focus in Governor development from providing certain elements of training and expecting Governors to take what they need to a system which focuses on individual Governors and works with their aptitudes and talents.

That reporting of prison performance may not reflect actual performance.

The use of fast-tracking.

The difference between leadership and management. Governing Governors are being seen more as organisational leaders than as managers.

The need to meet the business needs of the Prison Service.

A number of people to contact were suggested, although I subsequently decided to confine my study to Governors themselves, and it was agreed that we should meet again after a few months when we had both had time to

get started on our projects. I left this meeting feeling positive and with my head full of new information and ideas. Unfortunately my attempts to contact this person to arrange subsequent meetings were not successful and we did not meet again. Additionally the member of Prison Service staff who had originally authorised my research left the service during the early stages of the project and though he kept in touch for a while I no longer had a named contact within the Service.

### **What ethical implications and concerns are there?**

The process of obtaining ethical clearance for the project was quite simple. Only the most basic level of ethical clearance was required by Durham University as Prison Governors are not considered a vulnerable group within their definitions. This was also sufficient for the Prison Service. However, there are ethical factors to consider beyond simply obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality and making it clear that there would be no comeback if anyone chose to withdraw. Even though my participants could be expected to be articulate and self assured I still had responsibilities towards them as a researcher. The Social Research Association (2003, pp 25–40) discusses a number of areas of responsibility of researchers towards participants including:

Not to waste their time.

Not to be overly intrusive or to cause inconvenience.

To protect their interests, avoiding harm whether physical, psychological or emotional.

To maintain confidentiality and anonymity.

In addition to these I hoped that the research would prove interesting and useful both to individual Governors and to the Prison Service as a whole and that the experience of taking part would be enjoyable and interesting. I hoped to develop good relationships with ‘my’ Governors and did not want them to feel they were of no interest to me except as research material. This was expressed methodologically in the conception that Governors were both ‘experts’ and co-developers within the project.

As the research progressed it became apparent that the ethical considerations of working with a group of people such as Prison Governors who were not considered 'vulnerable' as far as the regulations to which I was subject were actually far more complex than blanket regulations allow for. Governing Governors are a small group, only 138 in England and Wales, thus it is relatively easy to identify individuals (Bryans, 2005). When one adds in the various differentiating factors such as gender, ethnicity, age, types of establishment, size of establishment, it is very difficult to maintain anonymity. For this reason some material which could be interesting and useful has not been presented in the study, or has been disguised. Prisoner confidentiality is another issue. Governors at times mentioned incidents that could, were one so inclined, possibly have been related to individual prisoners. I had to make sure that no information about prisoners was included in the study.

I am very conscious of the level of trust that Governors were willing to give to me as by taking part in the study they did make themselves vulnerable. Those who agreed to their interviews being taped were assured that no-one other than myself would hear the interviews or read transcripts or notes. As a result of this I think it is important that ethics procedures take into account the fact that even those who exercise considerable power and authority may in fact be vulnerable to harm when they agree to take part in research projects, and that not all ethical considerations may be apparent at the beginning of a project.

### **Are there any particular ways of doing research and interpreting information that you have used or been influenced by?**

In the next pages I attempt to analyse how I developed as a researcher during my Ph.D., and how, amongst all the ideologies, methodologies, and theories that were available to me. I came to choose and use certain methods/approaches/ways of expression. I show that this process is not always based on 'rational' choice and that the factors that underlie it may have long and surprising histories.

As mentioned earlier, I started with a long-standing interest in Goffman's (1979) work on roles and image presentation as presented in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. This approach has previously been used in a prison context to interesting effect by Elaine Crawley (2004), in her study of prison officers, where she couples it with an emphasis on emotional labour within that role based on the work of Arlie Hochschild. Goffman's work made intuitive sense to me as it fitted with my own experience. I know that I act differently, not just exhibiting different behaviours but bringing different aspects of my personality to the fore, in different situations. There are some Hilaries I'm happy and relaxed with while some situations feel awkward and do not fit so easily with the way I like to think of myself, or to think that others see me.

As a nurse, I always felt conscious of playing a role, especially when I had to wear a uniform and particularly when I was promoted to Sister and found that this role carried with it many expectations and assumptions. That I would be and was confident and in control, that I would no longer do certain tasks, like making beds – I did take a certain pleasure in confounding those expectations. It seemed as though I was in part taking on a composite identity historically created by my predecessors. I could bring certain individual features to the role but it had existed before me and would continue to exist after I left. The same applies to Prison Governors.

A political culture which emphasises ideas of progressive governance (see Chapter 3) and an organisational culture emphasising managerialism, targets and externally applied standards forces Governors to define and play their role in particular ways while disallowing other interpretations. As we shall read in the conversational material presented in the thesis and as already discussed in the examination of research and commentary on Prison Governors by Bryans, Wilson, Coyle and Bennett, Governors vary as to how comfortable they are with this and how positive or negative a contribution they feel it makes towards their abilities to function effectively and comfortably within their roles.

I found that a lot of the material that I read and discussed seemed to be almost, but not quite, appropriate to what I was doing and how I felt about

my work. ‘Yes but’ material. This may be a factor of my personality as much as of the material. It provided a jumping off point rather than a pathway to follow or a landing stage. Goffman's dramaturgical approach fitted in with my approach as did work on role play and role conflict (e.g. Biddle, 1979; Biddle and Thomas, 1966; Banga, 1997), but it took a lot of thinking, walks with my dog, discussion with Governors in the study, supervisors, colleagues and friends and occasional argument before I developed the approach I settled upon, and that was still subject to change as time progressed. From this developed the way I have used the interviews and gradually the different aspects of the research project evolved together with the processes involved in obtaining material, organising it and trying to understand and empathise with it, feeding into and helping to develop my theoretical ‘model’, and vice versa.

I was wary of climbing into a theoretical box because I felt that this risked closing off possibly enlightening areas and ideas, and that theory can objectify experience and distance us from it, creating indifference. This idea is eloquently presented by Angel-Ajani (2004) who suggests in her paper on African women in an Italian prisons, that placing the terrible experiences that form the subject matter of her research into a theoretical framework serves to lessen their impact and makes us less aware that these are experiences that people have gone through and have to live with day after day.

One thing I know for sure is that I cannot live with the fact that I peddle the flesh of women’s stories for academic consumption, making them pretty, because the realities of their lives are too difficult to bear. Through the incorporation of “theory” I have learned to water down difficult emotional moments so as not to appear too sentimental. (p134)

Another caveat is given by Shaw and Crompton in their paper, gloriously entitled after a line from a Jackie Chan film ‘Theory, Like Mist on Spectacles, Obscures Vision’ (2003) in which they consider theory-driven evaluation and remind readers that theories are both inclusive and exclusive. Obviously, I am not going to cover everything I possibly could,

nor would I want to as I would not be able to create something coherent, but I did not want to, nor did I feel able to, adopt a theoretical viewpoint early on in my work which could have made me unreceptive to some of the material that I encountered during the ensuing years. If I had adopted such a perspective I might have finished sooner though, and this is more of a concern for 'real world' research where deadlines are likely to be more of an issue.

I experienced frustration at times that the demands of a Ph.D. as a course of study can seem to devalue the words and experiences of research participants and of myself as a researcher. While appreciating the need to know one's field, I sometimes had difficulty with the idea that everything must be backed up by reference to experts (names in brackets) and a particular academic knowledge community. Governors are the 'experts'. As a researcher I have to be able to justify myself and my approach and I have felt myself at times stepping up a gear and presenting ideas with a more aggressive enthusiasm than I am entirely comfortable with in order to fend off criticism that did not look at what I have done but whether I had the right, within a Ph.D., to do it in the first place. At times I have felt quite defensive because I am not writing what I think of as a standard format Ph.D., although as I have gone through this process I have found more people who are sympathetic to and excited by less conventional approaches, even if they would not choose to use them in their own work. I also come across others whose adventurousness makes this piece seemed positively mundane – producing a whole new set of doubts! I also wanted to be able to bring in material from a range of disciplines, something that I think is becoming more acceptable within research, though one of my supervisors did ask me on one occasion to reassure him that I was not doing a psychology Ph.D., so there are some fears about crossing boundaries and the legitimacy of meandering into other disciplines.

An important element in managing the information was my background as an indexer. Indexing, to me, is a process in which empathy is extremely important. I have to try to put myself in the place of first-time and returning readers, as well as trying to understand what the author is attempting to 'get

across' to the readers. Empathy is also, as I have said, an important part of my approach to this project as a whole. Empathy and imagining.

From the beginning of the project I knew I wanted to meet and talk with the Governors face to face. I also knew I wanted to meet up more than once. Like the idea of roles, it was something I felt comfortable with and thought was right for the project without initially knowing why. I had to spend a lot of time thinking about it and finding out about what other researchers had done, and why, in order to understand why this was right for this particular project. Using other peoples' working experiences and reflections in order to clarify my own thoughts. Similarly for interpreting and trying to understand what the Governors said to me when we met. I did not have much of an idea of the range of options that I would find when I started looking and certainly not of how I was going to approach working with the material the Governors and I made. As I said earlier, I knew I wanted indexing to be a part of it, and initially had an idea of using indexing software in a manner akin to NVIVO. Which I have, in terms of organising and managing the interview material, but finding a way to present and study the material was, again, a long process of thought and not thought and trial and rejection.

I read material about various options – grounded theory, mixed methods, narrative, but it was in organisational studies books that I encountered through indexing that I began to find ideas that fired my enthusiasm. In particular, they took me back to Goffman and to ideas of performance, theatricality and aesthetics. I was also introduced to the work of Kenneth Burke and a long tradition of using theatre as a metaphor of the study of organisations. Through this, I gradually developed my own approach (and found myself at times reading material and hoping that the authors had not pre-empted me!)

Goffman (1979) views the self as defined in terms of behaviour appropriate to different situations. Each person has a repertoire of behaviours they can draw on. He describes how certain roles carry with them particular sets of manners and appearances – which he calls 'fronts', much as I described earlier for nurses.

When an actor takes on an established social role, usually he finds that a particular front has already been established for it. Whether his acquisition of the role was primarily motivated by a desire to perform the given task or by a desire to maintain the corresponding front, the actor will find that he must do both. (Goffman, 1979)

This is an interesting view to apply to people who take on particular roles within a work setting. Does someone become a Prison Governor principally because the elements of that role appeal to them, or because the image of the role appeals?

Sanders (2008) interprets Goffman's view as meaning that each person is a set of masks. We are the faces we present. However, this immediately raises the question of what, or who, is behind the mask? In theatre, there is always an actor, a separate, recognisable, individual entity. Indeed some theatre, notably Brechtian, (Mangham and Overington, 1987) uses the separateness of actor and character for dramatic effect. A similar notion occurs in pantomime and in some much earlier plays such as Aphra Behn's *The Rover* wherein characters speak directly to the audience thus involving us directly in the action on stage and blurring the onstage/offstage boundary. This emphasises the idea of audience complicity, which is found in Goffman's work and which Mangham and Overington suggest is a feature of dramatic presentation. However, while Person A is presenting a role as say, loving spouse or hard-working entrepreneur, to a complicit audience, the members of that audience are also presenting their own roles to a complicit audience of which person A is a member. It soon gets quite difficult to think about the complexities involved in what appears at first sight a fairly simple idea as everyone presents a front to everyone else.

Charles Handy (1998) points out that theatre is one of a number of possible metaphorical devices in the study of organisations. He refers to the work of Gareth Morgan, who suggested that metaphor and analogy give us our understanding of organisations and lists different possible metaphors for organisations.

As machines

As organisms

As brains

As cultures

As political systems

As psychic prisons

As flux and transformation

As instruments of domination.

Most of these conjure up an image just from reading them, but, for me at least, psychic prisons does not immediately suggest an idea of an organisation except as a place one would not wish to work for long. It is intended to refer to a situation in which individual and original thought is stifled, a point raised by one of the Governors in my study when he asked at what point does 'thinking outside the box' become deviant?

Goffman is seen by a number of writers as a key figure in the development of theatrical metaphor in the study of organisations. Taylor and Carboni (2008) suggest that it originates with Goffman's work and has been developed by other scholars since, notably Iain Mangham and Michael Overington. Others such as Young (1990) look back further than Goffman to Kenneth Burke, seeing Goffman as one of the principal actors who brought Burke's work into mainstream social thought. Possibly because, as Clark (2008) suggests, Goffman's work is superficially easy to read and understand whereas Burke's is less instantly reader-friendly. Timothy Clark (2008) comments that the dramaturgical metaphor has been 'popular and productive'. He comments that the dominance of Goffman's work over that of Burke

...has resulted in a general failure to recognize that life is not like theatre, but that it is theatre. The occurrence of drama in everyday life is no longer a matter of metaphor but of form: life is increasingly becoming theatrical and performative in character. (p401, emphasis in original)

Iain Mangham and Michael Overington (1987) put the theatrical approach into an historical context. Their account is too long and exhaustive to be dealt with fully here, but I shall pick out some particularly salient points. They also point out that it is a two-way metaphor, life can be metaphorically represented as theatre in theatre and theatre can represent life on the stage. They suggest that the facility with which these twin metaphors can be used is responsible for their enduring usage and tends to obscure their metaphorical nature. Thus we use theatrical phrases as commonplace. The same, of course also applies to other areas of the arts. 'Painting a picture', meaning to describe something, 'the rhythm of the day', and so on.

Mangham and Overington suggest that by the Elizabethan period in England theatre as a metaphor for life had become a cliché, citing Sir Walter Raleigh as an example. 'What is our life? A play with passion.' Life is 'a short comedy' in which we all pay parts and only death is real, only we die in earnest, that they guess'. They suggest that this use of metaphor, '[serves] to highlight a sense of individual alienation from allotted roles and to convey a sense of distance, of watching rather than fully participating in the pageants and rituals of everyday life' (p 29). I do not entirely agree that it suggests a lack of participation and the spectator role; it seems to speak the sense of external control within a particular religious context, as Raleigh wrote of God as 'the author of all our tragedies.' Machiavelli, in *The Prince* also emphasised the use of theatricality, the use of appearance for control and domination, and appearances which may be 'real' or consciously assumed. The image presented is the reality (Machiavelli, trans Bull, 2004; Mangham and Overington, 1987).

This idea of an assumed appearance becoming effectively real is an important one for Prison Governors, who take on an iconic role which carries with it assumptions and expectations – much as I found when I became 'Sister Faulkner', or like theatrical roles such as Hamlet, Archie Rice in Harold Pinter's *The Entertainer* or Willy Loman in Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. A particular actor may make a role 'their own' such as Marlon Brando playing Stanley Kowalski in Tennessee Williams' *Streetcar Named*

*Desire*, or may be a hard act to follow – Ian McKellen in Marlowe's *Edward the Second*. Following such a performance and trying to give your own interpretation carries extra difficulties. In an organisation, of course, taking over from unpopular predecessor, or one who has been seen as giving a poor performance can also have its problems as the interview material will show. As Goffman suggests, it may help in the early stages of playing a role that spectators may be willing to make assumptions about the person in that role – for example that they know what they are doing, which may allow them to appear more effective than their subjective evaluation of their performance does.

These mentions of particular iconic theatrical roles lead into ideas of role play theory which form the second strand to the framework I have adopted in this study. There are roles played within the dramatic production of imprisonment, there are also roles played within the dramatic production of a piece of postgraduate research. As described earlier, Goffman discusses the playing of roles in different circumstances and different ways of interpreting and manipulating these roles. These ideas have also been developed in work on role theory (for example Biddle, 1979; Biddle and Thomas, 1966).

Charles Handy (1998: 60) suggests why role theory can be useful in trying to understand organisational behaviour and behaviour within organisations:

...it will provide another language, another framework, to help us to understand why the world is not as easy a place to manage as it should be, why individuals suffer stress and strain, why organisations breed misunderstandings and conflict. It will provide one way of linking theories about individuals to theory of about organisations.

Handy suggests that through societal and technological change, people have a much wider range of roles available to them. This gives a greater element of choice – my husband was able to become an environmental scientist rather than going down the pit as his uncles did or being a turner like his father. Our son could move to another country to continue his university studies and still remain in easy contact with us and with his university

friends in different parts of the world. However, a wider range of choices reflects an increasingly complex society and roles within that society, which may cause stress and strain to individuals, groups and societies. In this study I am particularly concerned with one occupational set – Governing Governors – so I am principally applying role theory at an individual level. However, the Governors all work within the same organisation, the Prison Service, so the group is also an important consideration.

Handy (1998) gives a neat, brief outline of role theory, and I shall borrow from this to give my own brief description, bringing material from other sources for elucidation and elaboration where this is useful and/or interesting. The Governing Governors each form a focal point in this study and the central points of role sets of people and groups with whom they each interact with in their working lives.

Roles are defined in a number of ways. One of these is expectation – we expect people in certain occupational groups to behave in certain ways and might be disconcerted to see a nun tap dancing on the subway, or to go to our GP and be told that she/he had a thumping headache and a strange rash. Sometimes, as with Prison Governors, there may be a legal element to those expectations. They possess certain legal powers which they are expected to exercise. There are also behavioural expectations – being calm and in control; not drinking alcohol on duty; demonstrating fairness in dealing with staff and prisoners. However, as Bryans (2005) points out much of a Governors' work is hidden from scrutiny. Prisons, although they have become increasingly 'accountable' and 'visible' as a result of managerial practice and inspection systems, are still largely closed institutions.

There are also signs which help to delineate roles. When I commenced this research there were three grades of uniformed staff in the Prison Service, prison officer, senior officer and principal officer; the principal officer grade was abolished as part of a restructuring process which took place after I completed my interviews. Above these staff are on managerial grades and do not wear uniform, but there is a dress code. For Governing Governors, the wearing of a suit is the norm for males, women Governors

tended to wear suits during the cooler months and dress more casually, though still smartly, in the summer. Rachel commented, “I do wear a uniform; I would not normally dress like this.”

Office space is another sign of role. The Governors generally had large offices (though not all did), often with several functional areas: a desk with a computer, a separate table for discussions and, for some, a sofa and/or easy chairs for less formal meetings. All of the Governors’ offices were entered through the office of their personal secretary, who acted as gatekeeper in organising both physical access and diary space.

Fulfilling any role can lead to problems for the actor concerned. One of these is uncertainty about what a person's role is – role ambiguity. For example, a newly promoted Governing Governor who is used to playing a largely authoritarian role as Deputy may be uncertain as to how to behave when promoted to Governor and finding her/himself having to negotiate with representatives of partner organisations on an equal or subordinate footing. Handy (1998) points out that role ambiguity can give space for redefining or re-interpreting a role, but can also lead to role stress.

Handy gives an example of a list of the roles encompassed by the overall role of manager: planner, policy maker, expert, controller of rewards and punishments, arbitrator, exemplar, representative of the group, scapegoat, counsellor, friend, teacher. This complexity of roles-within-a-role can itself be a source of problems.

Bryans (2005) and Bryans and Wilson (2000) have attempted similar analyses of the role of prison Governors. Bryans (2005) examines the following aspects of the Governor’s role in his thesis:

General management

Finance and resources

Planning

Human resource management

Audit and monitoring

Leadership

Figurehead / representative

Interpretation and sense-making

Vision and direction

Incident command

Bryans suggests that these elements of the Governors' role can be found in most senior management situations, he then goes on to consider elements which he considers to be specific to the role of Governors:

Maintaining a secure prison

Achieving order through effective control

Providing positive regimes

Regulating the prison

Jailcraft – understanding prisoners and staff

Interestingly, of the respondents to the 2002 PGA survey who described themselves as Governing Governors the majority – 42 of 50 – when invited to describe their role simply put 'Governor' or an equivalent. The remaining eight wrote

Managing the prison both operationally and strategically

Command of the prison and accountable for everything!

Strategic manager/chief executive/standard setter/filler in of gaps/ picker up of all things problematic

I lead the prison

Total responsibility

Overall responsibility for achieving the KPTs/SDA within budget

In charge

Day to day oversight, strategic management of prison. Accountability and delivery of SDA and KPTs etc.

(SDA = Service Delivery Agreement; KPT = Key Performance Target)

A second potential problem is role incompatibility. This occurs when there are different, and apparently irreconcilable, expectations of a particular role. Handy suggests that the most difficult of these to deal with are expectations that clash with an individual's personal sense of identity.

Role conflict arises when two or more roles are carried out in the same situation but the expectations of the different roles are in conflict.

Role overload occurs when a person has to fulfil the expectations of too many and too varied a selection of roles. Handy points out that this is distinct from work overload, where a person has too much to do; the problem here is of the variety of demands. Handy suggests that this can be a particular problem in moving from executive to managerial roles – from doing things to getting things done.

Role underload tends to be associated with working at lower levels of an organisation and reflects a feeling that the expectations of a role are below the capacities of the individual in the role. Although this might not at first seem appropriate to Governors, it can be applied to them, for example, when decisions are imposed from Prison Service headquarters which Governors feel they have been insufficiently consulted upon and could, based on their experience of the knowledge of their prison, have contributed to and possibly improved. This will be seen in some of the interview material that considers Governors' autonomy.

Handy also suggests that delegation can result in feelings of role underload as a delegating manager is left feeling she/he has nothing to do. This need for a redefinition of one's working identity as one moves between roles arises in the conversations in this study.

All of these potential problems can lead to role-stress. As Handy points out stress can have both positive and negative effects. The negative effects of role stress are generally known as role strain which can lead to a variety of

behavioural and health-related signs and symptoms (although other factors may also cause the same effects).

Ideas relating to role playing will be discussed further as they arise in considering what the Governors in the study had to say in our meetings.

As I have already written, I have always inclined towards an interpretivist view even when I did not know about the existence of such things, and to focusing on individual experience. Ideally, I think research should be a mix of both qualitative and quantitative but I am better suited temperamentally to qualitative approaches and I think work should be enjoyable – at least most of the time.

It would be unreasonable for me to try to fit the Governor's experiences into a model I have created separate from those experiences. It would be difficult to live in an uncompromising, individually constructed world. We have to compromise, to share, and sometimes to relinquish an individual world so that we can share and live in the worlds of others. The way of looking at things I used in this study has been discussed with the Governors and in part developed from ideas they have raised in our conversations.

So far, there are three elements to this research: an overarching interpretivist framework, ideas of theatricality and dramatic presentation, and of role playing within that context. A fourth element in structuring the research is my identity as a researcher and as a middle-aged white woman with my own set of ethical, political, moral views and a disillusioned but enduring feminist outlook. A different researcher would do this research differently, given the same questions as a starting point. It is not possible for a researcher to distance her/himself from the work they do, so I adopt a reflexive approach and try to be aware of myself within the research, and how my presence may have influenced the study, and how I have in turn been influenced in developing my work.

Now it is time for the difficult task of trying to present a coherent account of the research approach I have developed. I have carried this developing model around in my head for several years as I have tried to create something I felt I could work with and, at times, it has seemed to move on

and develop of its own accord. Creativity and the aesthetic aspect of research and of organisational and individual working lives are also important parts of my approach.

My application of a theatrical model to the working lives of prison Governors (which could be extended to other workers and other working organisations), combines the 'theatre as metaphor' and 'life is theatre' approaches that I have already discussed. For the Governors themselves the roles they play are their lives, therefore, a life as theatre view is applicable and their experiences can usefully be considered within the framework of a theatrical production. Simultaneously for me as a researcher, not living that life as a Governor but trying to gain some understanding of it, the metaphor of life as represented by theatre is an appropriate one to represent my relationship to the Governors' working lives. Therefore, the two viewpoints are complementary and work together to assist in developing an understanding of what it is like to govern a prison. Within this two-stranded theatrical perspective ideas of role-playing and elements of roles are useful to assist in developing an understanding. Looking at role-playing from a theatrical perspective can also help in understanding the experiences that the Governors talk about, as I hope will become apparent in discussion of the interview/conversation material.

The 'delivery' of imprisonment can be seen as a theatrical production. The politicians and government level civil servants who provide funding and develop overall policy are the 'producers' of the show. Prison Service Headquarters provides direction, while the Governors utilise the resources available to them as actors to deliver interpretive performances which form part of the imprisonment 'show'. The Governors' role also has a directorial element which can bring them into conflict with the directorial and production roles of higher management and central government.

Similarly, the research process can also be seen as a theatrical process. Each meeting with a Governor is taken to be a staged event and, though falling within the continuing story of his or her working life, it is quite separate. It is being created for the purpose of this research and has a separate theatrical quality that will inevitably affect the material generated during the

improvisation that is the interview/conversation. The interviews focus on the role of Governors, although other roles may be mentioned at times, and look into that role and the different aspects and elements that comprise it.

I did not observe Governors doing their work, except on a few occasions. I accompanied one Governor on his morning walk around the prison and attended two morning meetings; occasionally things would come up while I was at the prison and would have to be dealt with during our meetings. What I present here, and what I have worked with, is Governors talking about and reflecting upon their work. This can be seen as a second level performance, staged entirely for the purpose of this study in which the Governors, still in role, discuss that role. And I, in my role as researcher, ask questions, listen to answers and now and then talk about my role. This is, I think, a complex and fascinating idea – to reflect on a role while playing the role, internal rather than external reflexivity. It is something that is commonly done – for example in social work supervision, or Ph.D. supervision, but I wonder how much the possible implications are considered.

Each interview is part of a longer drama, which could form the basis for an ethnographic study (as used by Crawley (2004) in her study of the working lives of prison officers). Or they could form the basis, through storytelling, of a narrative. Indeed, I initially thought of using a narrative approach to the study and interpretation of these interviews. However, it rapidly became apparent that this would not be appropriate, as they were not essentially narrative in structure. This, together with the staged artificiality of the events, led me to the interview-as-improvised-drama approach although within the interviews there are stories, micro-narratives, and some of these can be lifted from the surrounding material and used as narratives for the purpose of interpretation and discussion.

The dramas take place against two principal contextual backgrounds, the individual – each Governor's developing career; and the institutional – the Prison Service and beyond. Added to this are the contextual elements that I bring to the interviews, my increasing experience in the role of researcher and my changing views and knowledge, together with the developing

relationship with the Governors whom I met several times over a two year period.

As I read other studies which used interview material I felt more and more that I did not want to subjugate the Governors' words to my interpretation. I therefore looked at ways which would enable me to foreground their words. From this, I developed the idea of using their words in a composite fashion to create scenes, although I did not entirely stick to this idea when I came to arrange the interview material. I was aware that in doing this I was changing the context of their words, but I felt that it was a more honest way of presenting things than taking them completely out of context and surrounding them with my own ideas. By presenting the views of Governors together I aim to create a richer and more effective representation of their thoughts and ideas, and to demonstrate the diversity and unity of opinions expressed. As I created the scenes I tried to draw on the empathy and understanding that I felt I had developed with the Governors, to enable me to manipulate their words in this way without misrepresenting them.

I am aware, as I have written in my prologue, that I have manipulated and filtered the words that the Governors spoke. This raises the issue of power within the context of research. A number of authors (Riessman, 1993; Burck, 2005; Poindexter, 2003) discuss this and take the view that the researcher is in a comparatively powerful position. This is often the case, for example when a researcher recruits participants who are socially excluded or marginalised and may have little control over how the researcher treats the information they give to the project, or when questions are asked about deeply personal, and painful topics. Although I did not feel powerless, or vulnerable, I was aware that the Governors who agreed to see me had a right to remove me, or even ban me, from their prison. My access was entirely under prison staff control. Similarly, although I had been given permission to carry out the research by Headquarters this did not place any obligation on individual Governors to take part. The Governors were an articulate group, used to being 'in charge' and they were granting me a favour. My 'power' within the research lay more in the design of the project

and, especially, in the interpretation of the material created. I hoped to share this with the Governors by inviting them to raise issues, by the use of minimal structure in our conversations and by revisiting issues with them to get varying viewpoints.

Riessman (1993) comments that some qualitative approaches to data suppress features of the narrative by taking snippets out of context and eliminating sequential and structural elements. This links to problems which Riessman and others raise concerning the manipulation and filtration of interview recordings which take place. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest that the decision to record represents the first in a series of manipulations. During each manipulation something is lost from the original conversation. Any form of recording is selective and strips out parts of the wider context of the interview. Riessman takes this further and suggests that the material gleaned in the interview goes through five filtration stages. These stages are attending, telling, transcribing, analysing and reading. Riessman's structure is particularly interesting because it shows how different people can affect the material. In attending, it is the person telling the story, in this research a Governor, who will have attended to certain aspects of events and will have exercised selective memory. They then choose what to include when they tell me about events. It is also important to keep in mind that memory is not always reliable. I have no reason to think that anyone deliberately misled me, but there may have been things left out of their accounts, or other people involved in the events they describe might have presented a different view as in a song from the musical '*Gigi*' (Lerner and Loewe, 1958):

He:	She:
We met at nine.	We met at eight.
I was on time.	No, you were late.

Ah yes! I remember it well.	
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In the third of Riessman's filtering stages responsibility passes to the researcher and how s/he transcribes the interview. What is put in and what is left out. The next level is also the responsibility of the researcher, although s/he may share it with participants or other researchers, that of analysis, as Riessman refers to the process, or interpretation. Finally there is the process of reading what has been produced at the end of the research process, when any number of individuals can bring their own views to bear on the material presented. I am using reading in a broader sense here than reading words on a page to refer to the process of attending to the material produced by the researcher in whatever form, so this would include, for example, conference presentations. I would argue that Riessman has left out some stages, for example the researcher's selectivity in writing up her/his research and deciding what to present. We can see that the whole process of filtration can carry on to a new level in that the researcher is selective in her/his attending, and in her/his telling and then people (other researchers perhaps) who use that material will make selective decisions in how they use it. As I have in making reference to papers throughout this dissertation

A second point of relevance is that decisions to include or exclude certain materials may in part depend on our concerns, whether conscious or unconscious, about how we present ourselves. Thus this links with the dramaturgical theme which underlies this project (Goffman, 1979).

There was an obvious problem of representation with the two Governors who had not wished to have their interviews recorded. But as I had made extensive notes I was able to use those notes, together with cues provided by the interviews with other Governors and my own recall to quote from the words of those two individuals, although I did not have as much material to draw from. I felt it was better to make as much use as I could of those interviews, and, although I did not have them available to listen to they did affect my thinking as I studied the material.

### **How did you go about carrying out the interviews?**

As previously stated I did not wish to have a set series of questions for each interview but, similar to Rubin and Rubin's (2005) strategy, I decided to prepare some principal themes. For the first interview these were to include background information about each Governor's career and career path and exploration of their current role within the establishment and within the Prison Service as a delivery mechanism. Following a careful reading and interpretation of these first interviews I would then develop themes for ensuing meetings and so on through the project. This meant I had to listen carefully to understand the subtleties of what people were telling me and be willing to ask for elaboration or clarification when I needed it (Rubin and Rubin, 2005); as Pawson and Tilley (1997) suggest, 'mutual understanding emerges via the in-depth exchange of ideas.' For each interview I had a theme, although sometimes Governors chose to talk more about something else and I did not resist this, and sometimes something had occurred, such as the POA strike of 29<sup>th</sup> August 2007 which could not be ignored. Trying to stick rigidly to a plan would have depleted the material and might have adversely affected the relationships I was able to develop, although no one tended to stray far off the overall subject so I was never placed in a position where I felt we were really 'losing the plot'.

### **You chose to interview in a particular pattern, why was that?**

I chose to use repeat meetings because I hoped to capture some of the dynamic, changing nature of work in the Prison Service. This can be applied at several levels. For example, one Governor who talked with me had recently started their first 'in charge' posting. During our first encounter this Governor talked about feelings of being deskilled and overwhelmed by the job. That there is a lot that new Governors are not told about. We talked about hopes that the situation would ease over the coming months, and I went away with a 'cliff-hanger' feeling – how would things be when I went back? Would some of the problems the Governor had outlined have been resolved?

Other Governors had recently moved to different prisons so again were involved in adjusting to new situations, new groups of prisoners and staff and, in some cases, new line managers if they had moved to a new area. I

also knew that it was likely that some Governors would change jobs or even leave the Prison Service during the period of my research (Hansard, 2006; Prison Reform Trust, 2003; Bryans, 2005). One Governor left the Service and two changed jobs, while several experienced changes of line manager during my study.

By meeting with Governors on several occasions I hoped to witness, albeit at some distance, how their working experiences were changing as they became more experienced, took on new challenges, and how these experiences were also changed by wider forces in the Prison Service, the Criminal Justice System and the wider social and political arenas. Thus the conversations I attempt to understand and to learn from in this research are episodic, not seamless, continuous narratives. Additionally I wanted to uncover both shared and varying experiences, and for this reason I chose to meet with several Governors. This meant that, as well as the longitudinal quality that repeated interviews would give to the research, there would also be a latitudinal quality imparted by my taking some themes and questions to each conversation in the series.

These represented ideas that had arisen from my previous experiences and from research papers, books and other texts I had read. I also used audio and audiovisual material as supplementary sources. In addition to these ideas, which provided an opening move in each session, and gave me a structure to fall back on should the conversation start to flag, I also encouraged each Governor to raise the issues that were of importance to them. Chase (2005) emphasises the need to be well-prepared for unstructured interviewing while reminding readers that researchers cannot predict the course a narrative will take.

This kind of repeat interviewing has been called Responsive Interviewing (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). Rubin and Rubin suggest that it is 'a dynamic and iterative process' (p 15) which reflects the personality of the researcher; is adaptable to different relationships between interviewer and interviewee; and can change as both individual interviews and the research project progress. Pawson and Tilley (1997) suggest that the use of unstructured interviews offers a greater opportunity for understanding participants' own

ideas, writing that ‘the subject’s ideas and the subject matter of investigation are one and the same thing’ (p157).

### **How is your research different from earlier work in this area?**

As previously stated, little research has been undertaken looking at the working lives of Prison Governors. Recent material, especially the work of Shane Bryans, who to date has been the principle author of literature on Governors in English and Welsh prisons, has been covered in some detail in one of the earlier ‘scene setting’ chapters.

I did answer this question at some length in the original self interview however, as I mentioned earlier the way in which I present the material developed and changed somewhat from my initial idea. It became apparent to me that I needed to be flexible in this in order to represent the themes and elements that seemed most important to the Governors.

I tried constructing scenes using extracts from the conversations and found that in order to be ‘true’ to the material I had to vary the way in which I did this. I had originally intended that every scene would approach an, albeit stilted, exchange of views. When I came to put this into practice I found that there were some topics I felt had to be in the final thesis about which everyone, or nearly everyone, had something to say. These are put together as ‘collages’ (Dillard, 1982, Denzin, 2001) or patchworks and cover the following topics:

Joining the Prison Service

Training and development

Becoming a Governing Governor

Time management

Staying in post

Support

These were topics I specifically asked all of the Governors about. There were other things that came up that I did not discuss with everyone. For,

example, I saw four of the Governors – Matthew, Joshua, Rachel and Luke – shortly after the POA strike, so it was natural to ask them about this. Other issues were raised by Governors who spoke about them at greater length. Thus for some of the collages I put together longer monologues from two or three Governors and have written about those. Finally, I had originally planned to have a ‘scene’ about aspects of working in the Prison Service. Unsurprisingly, there was a good deal of material which came under this heading and several Governors spoke at some length about different aspects of this. In order to present this material in an appropriate manner I decided to intersperse ‘soliloquies’ amongst the ‘scenes’ around a general theme of working in the Prison Service. Doing this does, sadly, disadvantage those Governors who preferred not to be recorded, and one interview which was lost due to an equipment fault, as I do not have this material to present in full. It also rather upset the aesthetic aim of presenting a pleasing patchwork of material and led me to think again about the aesthetics of my writing and to redesign it to accommodate this different style of presentation.

In the use of ideas of performance I emphasise the ideas of Burke, Goffman and their successors, discussed earlier, of performance in life and work, thus stressing the theoretical view that the process of research is itself a performance; each member of the cast of this project has played a particular role within it. As a performer, as well as playing directorial and production roles I, as the primary researcher, have a profound effect in shaping the direction the work takes and on the material collected in conversation with the Governors – choosing to adopt an unstructured approach influences the data as much as if I had used a rigidly structured interview format – the interpretation and understanding of that material and the conclusions drawn from it.

Thus it is important that I reflect continuously on my role within the project, what influences my approach and how that approach affects my work. It is also important to make this manifest within the thesis. I do this by adopting a first person point of view in my writing, to express my ownership of the work. It is my voice that speaks to the reader rather than a

detached, authoritative third person narrator. I also interject at times with personal narrative which helps to show how my experiences have shaped the approach I have taken. I evaluate my own experiences as a researcher during the project and in looking at, and attempting to understand my conversations with the Governors, I draw on my experience of working as a nurse within the National Health Service as well as using my imagination to try to think myself into their role to develop my understanding. This also adds another element to the performative quality of the work.

Reflection has been used as a tool to assess and improve the quality of work in some professions – perhaps notably supervision sessions in social work, counselling and psychotherapy for many years. The Governors in my study value time to reflect on how they have approached different aspects of their work and dealt with particular incidents, such as the Prison Officers' strike.

Jacques Lacan (1991) discusses reflexivity and the resistance of the analyst and applies this to the interpretation of research data. For example, how do the vocabularies and conventions of a discipline or an approach constrict approaches to research and the interpretation and understanding of data? In other words, how does the 'baggage' that the researcher brings with them affect the research? These questions extend to the whole of the research process. Pierre Bourdieu (2004, p89) writes of reflexivity as an aid to improving the quality and value of research:

Understood as the effort whereby social science, taking itself for its object, uses its own weapons to understand and check itself, it [reflexivity] is a particularly effective means of increasing the chances of attaining truth by increasing the cross-controls and providing the principles of a technical critique, which makes it possible to keep closer watch over the factors capable of biasing research.

Kim Etherington (2004) discusses the practice of reflexive research and offers advice, grounded in her own experience, to researchers at different stages of experience, including post-graduate level suggesting that:

Our personal history, when it is known to us and processed in ways that allow us to remain in contact emotionally and bodily with others

whose stories remind us of our own, can enrich our role as a researcher. Our 'empathetic resonance' (Spiro *et al* 1993) allows us to hear the others' experiences without having to defend ourselves against that knowing. (p180)

Like Lacan, Etherington sees reflexivity as a way of guarding against resistance to understanding and knowledge. This is essential when one is trying to gain an understanding of a situation that is alien, and may even be distasteful in some ways.

Linda Finlay (2002), who traces reflexive approaches to roots in ethnography and anthropological research, adopts a similar approach to Bourdieu in suggesting that by engaging in 'explicit self-analysis of their own role' researchers can 'evaluate how intersubjective elements influence data collection and analysis.' Interestingly Finlay considers reflexivity within particular epistemological traditions, which can conflict with the standpoints of Lacan and Etherington as unless these standpoints are made explicit and examined by the researcher and those who advise on and critique their work they will produce resistance.

Thus reflexivity is an important tool for enhancing the quality, honesty, truthfulness and value of research or professional working practice. It is, however, difficult to achieve by oneself and needs the support of trusted colleagues and mentors to be effective.

### **What is the point of your research?**

The purpose of the research has in part developed over the course of actually doing the research. I started out with my own ambition and curiosity, and the need for something to do after I lost my job as researcher for the PGA as I was not confident of my ability to make a living from freelance work at that point. Apart from those selfish reasons I was very interested in the topic and had developed interest in and sympathy for Governors during the time I had worked for the PGA and learnt a little about their job and the problems, frustrations and satisfactions they experienced. From this initial contact I developed an interest in well-being as I was struck by features such as the long hours that Governors often work and the lack of appreciation that they sometimes feel.

Initially I wanted to find out more and felt that in an area with so little research history something useful was bound to come out of it and I was able to formulate some initial research questions that formed the basis of the work at the beginning. These questions have been pinned up on my study wall as a reminder to keep me more or less on track as I have worked and the project has developed.

1. What tensions or conflicts arise within the role of Prison Governors from the fact that imprisonment is a contentious issue politically, socially, culturally and morally?
2. What tensions or conflicts arise within the role of Prison Governors from the apparent contradiction between the degree of autonomy they can exercise in certain areas (e.g. contracting out of some services; early release for some prisoners) and the high degree of prescription laid down in some areas by the requirement to meet managerial targets?
3. What tensions or conflicts arise from the conflicting, or potentially conflicting purposes ascribed to imprisonment, e.g. security and rehabilitation? How are these affected by factors such as overcrowding?
4. Prisons are dynamic environments, set within a wider dynamic context of business and political development and change. How do Governors respond to and manage change?
5. What training and support do Prison Governors feel they need?
6. How is full accountability ensured within closed institutions where confidentiality must be preserved?
7. How do Prison Governors characterise their professional identities and moralities? Do these conflict with their personal identities and moralities?

However as I have worked through the project and largely due to chance encounters with material that I have indexed I have developed a particular interest in ideas and issues around leadership learning and development and the well-being of Governors as employees for whom the Prison Service has a duty of care.

Leadership is a key aspect of the role of Governing Governors. It goes beyond their roles as managers of establishments. In the conversations I had with Governors it was characterised as a visionary role – that the Governing Governor develops a vision for the development of the prison and communicates that to staff. There is also the leadership role that is associated with taking command during extraordinary incidents. All of the Governors had experience of this during the research as the POA staged a one day strike. There were also some other situations requiring the particular use of leadership skills, unrest within a prison, building work, changing of role of the prison within the service and other incidents within prisons such as episodes of self-harm, re-profiling and altering staffing arrangements.

The Prison Service needs people to run prisons. Those people need to be effective leaders. Once those leaders are in place it is in the interests of the Prison Service to retain them as employees while they develop their skills as leaders so that those skills are exercised to the benefit of the Prison Service. This study looks at how a number of Governors see themselves as having developed as leaders, how they perform that role in the different settings in which they work and, in conjunction with that, at aspects of employee well-being that affect how, and how effectively, they perform. I use Brun and Cooper's (2009) 'missing pieces' model as a framework to consider aspects of well being. Brun and Cooper describe seven factors that they suggest are important in maintaining employee well-being.

Recognition at work – this involves '[e]xpressing appreciation to employees genuinely and constructively.' (p 8). Appreciation should be shown not just for achievements, but for contributions made and for personal qualities. This implies a move away from target and process-oriented approaches which have become the norm within the Prison Service following the adoption and New Public Management, managerialist styles of organisation and management which, as discussed earlier, experienced commentators such as Bryans and Wilson feel have worked to the detriment of the Prison Service.

Social support – having someone to trust for support during times of emotional difficulty. As we shall see Governors largely have to create their own support networks and for some this is more difficult than for others, due to both situational factors, such as career mobility and to personal factors. People need different levels of trust to establish this kind of relationship.

Respect at work – this means applying ‘mutually acceptable standards of courtesy’ (p 8) which will lead to higher quality and greater satisfaction in interactions resulting in the formation of strong working relationships and enhanced cooperation.

Work/life balance – Brun and Cooper do not see this simply in terms of achieving balance between work and non-work, but as a means by which improving one area of one’s life will have a spill over effect into others. Thus their view is more challenging than simply that of ensuring that one part of one’s life does not dominate to the detriment of others.

Workload – this refers to the quantity, pace, intensity and any deadlines associated with work to be done and the combined and cumulative effects of these factors. Brun and Cooper point out that an overly heavy workload will result in fatigue, poor concentration, feelings of effortfulness and mental and physical strain resulting in stress, isolation and demoralisation which affect not only the individual member of staff concerned but also business efficiency.

Participation in decision making – Brun and Cooper suggest that employees should be able to influence decisions about how work is done; to make suggestions and give feedback. They also point out that this gives staff the opportunity to be creative in developing ideas and solutions while allowing them to develop their abilities. This links to an aspect of role discussed elsewhere in the thesis, that of role underload whereby if a job is too undemanding or staff are not given the opportunity to use and develop their abilities this can lead to frustration and stress.

Presence of role conflict or role ambiguity – role conflict results from conflicting demands which present staff with seemingly impossible tasks

involving reconciling competing demands and expectations. Role ambiguity leaves staff uncertain of expectations or practices within the workplace. For example in this study one Governor felt she had been insufficiently informed about her new role and the feeling that she had to uncover much of this for herself left her feeling deskilled and vulnerable.

Brun and Cooper suggest that employee well-being tends to be neglected, and this does seem to be the case for at least some of the Governors in this study as the extracts reproduced later in the thesis will show. They also make the point that these factors are interactive and cumulative in their effects such that an improvement in one area will tend to have knock-on benefits in others. Staff who feel their well-being is important to employers are likely to be more resilient than those whose subjective experience is that they are just expected to 'get on with it' with little in the way of consideration or appreciation.

Alongside Brun and Cooper's analysis of employee well-being I also use Kempster's (2009) analysis of leadership learning as a framework for examining how Governors feel they have developed skills for the job and how this process might be enhanced. Kempster uses a qualitative, interview based approach that allows him to draw on the experience of several leaders in developing his theory of leadership learning. The key interview he uses, which introduces his study, is with Sir Chris Bonnington. From this interview Kempster draws several themes which form the basis of his analysis of his remaining interviews with business leaders.

The limitations of formal learning. Kempster suggests that key aspects of leadership learning are that it tends to be informal and highly contextualised. He reports that in his interview Chris Bonnington reported that the formal leadership instruction he received at Sandhurst was of limited use until he coupled it with observation of and reflection on the performance and practices of officers he encountered. He makes the point that both good and bad practices can provide useful learning opportunities. Several of the Governors in this study reported similar experiences of learning through observation and 'filing things away' that they thought would be useful for future reference.

The influence of notable people. This links to the point above. Bonnington identifies one particular individual whom he admired as a leader, but again he comments that he also learnt from those he did not consider adept as leaders. Again this is echoed by a number of the Governors in my study, some of whom single out particular individuals from whom they feel they have learnt during their careers, or current colleagues and more senior members of staff who they admire and who they feel set a good example and are willing to help them develop as governors.

Critical role enactment, reflecting on one's own performance – Bonnington frames this within his experience of leading mountaineering expeditions saying that the experience of leading and then reflecting on those experiences had enabled him to develop as a leader. Bonnington's emphasis on the importance of this element of leadership learning may be particularly salient for Governors as, like him, although others do the same kind of thing, they are often quite isolated and do not have access to feedback from others who are familiar with and understand the role they have to play. Governors spoke about drawing on their store of observations when reflecting on their own performances and about the importance of being able to have discussions with trusted colleagues.

Situated learning through participation, becoming part of a leadership community with a particular culture - Kempster describes this as going beyond enactment to become part of a leadership community, learning the 'customs, rituals and practices' of that community which gives access to a shared body of knowledge. This echoes Lave and Wenger's work on communities of practice (see, for example, Wenger, 2009). Governors achieve this in part through their own informal networks and from encounters with other Governors during training sessions conferences and meetings which in addition to formal agendas can provide opportunities for informal discussion and sharing of ideas and experiences.

Identification with leadership – here Kempster raises issues of identity; that in order to be an effective leader it is necessary to see oneself in that role, to adopt that identity. This links to another key area that underpins this thesis, Goffman's theory of the presentation of the self. As I discuss elsewhere this

is a particularly interesting issue as the role of leader exists separately from the person who acts it, although they will bring their individual approach and qualities to it. Goffman suggests that this can help to ease the transition into a role as once an individual is seen to be in a position they may be credited by other staff with the necessary qualities, experience and knowledge to play it even though at first they may feel they are sadly lacking in these. Effectively this can create a protective 'front', camouflaging aspects of an individual's performance that he or she feels are less than adequate.

Performance capability as a leader – Bonnington suggested that openness to feedback is an important leadership quality and that poor leaders will shy away from feedback whereas those who are more confident of their abilities and position, and, perhaps, more committed to their development within leadership roles will welcome it as an important contribution to that development. Trust is an important part of this feedback relationship, in a mutually trusting and respectful relationship feedback is less likely to be seen as threatening.

Aspiration to lead – this may seem a very obvious aspect of leadership learning, that people must want to lead but it is an important element in the development of leaders as without this they will not maximise available observational learning situations and are unlikely to get full learning benefit from encounters with significant individuals they meet during their earlier careers. Having this aspiration can also help to focus on salient aspects of network development and will feed into reflective practices developed during the earlier stages of a Governor's career.

Contextual learning, leadership learning as lived experience – Kempster again draws a link with Lave and Wenger's work on communities of practice. Bonnington's 'perspective of leadership was shaped by the ethos and values of climbing' (p 10) for Governing Governors it is shaped in part by the ethos and practices of Governorship as they encounter them through the earlier stages of their careers, and as Governors as well as by the ethos and practices of public service both of which were important for Governors who took part in this study. Kempster points to the uniqueness of leadership

within a mountaineering context, suggesting that this is very different from an organisational one. However, Bryans (2000, 2005) regards governing prisons as a unique form of leadership, unlike other forms of organisational leadership.

Kempster's view is that leadership is learnt rather than taught, and that leadership and leadership learning construct each other through a continuous iterative process as experience develops skills and awareness. Thus although it is to some extent possible to prepare for leadership it can only be learned through actually doing and living it, by performing the role.

Thus I work within an overall interpretive framework, looking at both governing prisons and Ph.D. research as performance – as roles enacted by the Governors and myself. Within this performative, interpretive frame I use Kempster's (2009) model of leadership learning as a way of looking at how Governors learn to be leaders and make the transition from management to leadership and how this process might be enhanced. At the same time I use Brun and Cooper's (2009) missing pieces model to consider Governors' well-being, the maintenance of which is essential to the effective development and performance of leadership skills and to the retention of able staff.

## Cast List

*Hilary*: the researcher and Ph.D. student.

*Mark*: Governor of Young Offenders' Institution, first in-charge posting, one meeting. Left Prison Service.

*Matthew*: Governor of city local prison, first in-charge posting, moved during study. Three meetings.

*Samuel*: Governor of closed female prison, first in-charge posting, four meetings (final meeting not recorded due to equipment failure).

*Rebecca*: Governor of Young Offenders' Institution, first in-charge posting, two meetings. Moved to another, non-operational, role.

*Rachel*: Governor of city local prison, second posting, four meetings (not recorded).

*John*: Governor of local prison, first in-charge posting, four meetings.

*Joshua*: Governor of resettlement prison, first in-charge posting, four meetings.

*Luke*: Governor of city local prison, second posting, four meetings (not recorded).

*Ruth*: Governor of Young Offenders' Institution, first in-charge posting, joined later in the study, two meetings. A third meeting which I had hoped to arrange at the very end of writing the thesis was prevented by the weather conditions of December to January 2009/10.

## **Cast information**

This is an outline sketch, as to give too much detail might make the individuals identifiable and would breach our anonymity agreements.

This research focuses on Governing Governors within the public sector Prison Service. Each prison has a Governing Governor who is responsible for the overall management of the prison and for providing leadership and direction within the prison. There is always a single Governing Governor, irrespective of the size of the prison, but larger prisons will have larger management teams with more complex systems of delegation. The grade held by individual Governing Governors within the Prison Service career structure also varies; a Governing Governor may be at any level on the operational management scale from D to A (the highest grade) depending on an evaluation of the overall level of responsibility of their job (Prison Service Pay Review Body, 2006). He or she will have passed a Suitable To Be In Charge (STBIC) job simulation assessment; some will have had to pass this in order to take up posts as Deputy Governors.

Governing Governors are the only staff for whom the title Governor is still in official use, other former Governor grades are now described as operational management grades, although within the prisons themselves they still tend to be referred to as Governors; this is particularly the case for Deputy Governors. Governing Governors also have an important public and community role, representing the prison within the community and acting as negotiators with outside service providers, charitable institutions and other interested bodies, although, as the interviews indicate, the amount and nature of this work is variable.

Nine Governing Governors from across England and Wales were recruited to be part of the research. They worked in a variety of settings, including young offender institutions, a women's prison, community local prisons taking prisoners directly from the courts, open/resettlement and closed training prisons. The sizes of the prisons ranged from those taking approximately 200 inmates to one which could house over 900. Most took remand, convicted and sentenced prisoners. The categories of prisoners in each prison also varied, although none were high security. Three Governors

were women and six men. Their length of career in the Prison Service ranged from six to twenty seven years.

For six of the Governors their prison at the start of the project was their first in charge posting, and their time in post at the first interview ranged from three to eighteen months. This reflects an overall demographic change within the Governor grades that was highlighted by the PGA survey (PGA, 2002) which showed that a large number of Governors were approaching retirement age, in addition to those who moved to different prisons or were promoted or left the service for other reasons. Thus there had been a number of new appointments made throughout the Service in the months preceding the start of interviews.

The Governors came from a variety of working backgrounds prior to joining the Prison Service, two had been in the armed forces, two came from university, one had been an engineer, one in retail, two in Probation and one came from local government. Their careers in the Prison Service had also followed different paths, some had joined as prison officers and worked up through the ranks; some had joined as prison officers and subsequently applied to join the Accelerated Promotion Scheme (APS), a scheme which aims to identify people with the potential to become Governors and promote them through the ranks at a faster rate than would normally be expected; some had joined directly on APS; one had joined as a direct entrant on the basis of previous managerial experience; and one had been part of the now-defunct cross-hierarchical transfer scheme which allowed people from other areas of the civil service to transfer across at a managerial level and undertake a shortened training. Their individual stories about how and why they came to join the Prison Service are discussed below. Most of the participants had worked in seven or eight different locations, including time spent at Prison Service headquarters.

Thus even in this small group there is considerable heterogeneity and it would be very hard to create an image of a 'typical' Governor. This is a particularly interesting aspect of the role, and one that initially attracted me to it as an area for research – that this was a group of people all with the

same job title, all doing different jobs and, as is demonstrated by the interviews, doing them in different and creative ways.

## **Auditions and Casting**

WHY?

WOULD SUIT YOU

PEOPLE PERSON

MANAGEMENT

PUBLIC SECTOR

NOT TOO DIFFERENT

COMFORT ZONE

PUBLIC SERVICE

SERENDIPITY

CAREER PROSPECTS

PAY

RACHEL – I knew nothing about the Prison Service, I joined as an officer.

MARK – Well, my background is that I joined the Prison Service in 1979.

JOSHUA – I joined back in eighty two, so I guess the original reasons why I joined are sort of stuck back in, partly in history.

JOHN – I'd always been a people person.

RACHEL – I was an army nurse, I left at 24.

LUKE – I've worked for the Prison Service for 22 years, before that I worked in retail.

RACHEL – I'm a people person.

REBECCA – My train broke down in the middle of the Pennines on this grey miserable day and I ended up reading the whole of the newspaper rather than just skimming the headlines.

SAMUEL – I was a senior Probation Officer, I became a member of the SMT in the prison, got more interested in the Prison Service, you know, to some extent disillusioned with probation, just much more involved in it and when the opportunity came, yeah, I took it, to apply.

JOSHUA – It was very broad, it was a very broad advertisement and it was this, this idea of doing something socially useful, but that had a real challenging, you know...

REBECCA – I think it was the Independent or the Guardian or something. Anyway, in the midst of, you know, kind of, this newspaper, was an advertisement for accelerated promotion. Um, and I applied for it. I thought 'Oh that might be quite interesting.'

RUTH – I wanted to be a Prison Governor as a teenager; I was a teenager in the days of 'Within These Walls', Googie Withers. Do you remember that programme? I can't remember that much about the programme now, but I do remember I used to watch it and it seemed like a very interesting job. But anyway I changed my mind and decided I wanted to be a Probation Officer.

LUKE – For me the attraction was financial, prison officers could earn a lot of money because of overtime.

JOHN – One of my best friends had been a prison officer but had quit the Prison Service to become a Probation Officer. And he said to me, “I didn’t have the makings, that’s why I came out. But you have. Why don’t you give it a go?”

JOSHUA – I think I did, I actually did respond to the advertisement, and the managerial type emphasis and, I guess that is what attracted me and it’s still what attracts me really, you know, because over time I mean the role has changed a good deal but it’s still this combination of doing something on behalf of the public, I mean, we are public servants.

SAMUEL – I only joined five years ago, I was doing other things before that.

MARK – It was a bit of a comfort zone as well, if I’m brutally honest. I was in the Royal Navy before that, uh, and it was, I joined as an officer and to undergo your initial training in those days you used to go into an establishment for eight weeks.

SAMUEL – I’d been in the Probation Service for twenty years, I’d done two secondments to the Prison Service. It’s six years ago this month since I started the training.

JOHN – I was a local councillor, I was a district councillor and a parish councillor and I was also the Deputy Mayor and my house was just behind the prison and I represented the ward in which the prison quarters were.

MARK – So I joined seventy nine. It interested me, but it was another unified service if you like.

RUTH – I don’t know if I had some kind of hope that I could change the world.

REBECCA – I never saw any fast track stuff for the Prison Service and I’ve never seen any of it and I’ve never seen it advertised since and I’m absolutely convinced it was just fate that made that train, it probably was

because everyone kind of said to me, “Why on earth are you joining the Prison Service?” It’s just, you know, I don’t believe we as a society should be, that we should lock people up.

MATTHEW – and I decided to go to [city prison] because that was nearest to my home. My [relative] had previously [worked there] which had all sorts of slightly amusing consequences...

JOSHUA – I remember that I was attracted to what was described as management with a social conscience, management in a social setting, something that was working with people and had a socially useful purpose...

MATTHEW – It was, it definitely the things that attracted me to it were, I could, it was a job for life which I found, and still find, attractive.

LUKE – I was attracted to a job where I thought I could make a difference. I came from [city] and I knew the prison as part of the community, in a lot of prisons staff won’t go out in uniform coats.

MARK – I attended an exit course from the navy and that was police, fire brigade and the Prison Service. So I sat the exams for all three services and everything like that, but I decided to opt for the Prison Service.

LUKE – I wasn’t interested in management at first, working in retail had put me off.

MATTHEW – I was a Prison Officer for about three and a half years, then at the time I was working on high security which was interesting in a lot of ways but on a day to day basis could be a mind numbingly dull job, the advertisement for accelerated promotion came through and at the time I did it the initial bit of the process was an application form and if your application was accepted there was a short interview and some psychometrics. I thought of it as a day out of the normal routine to go and do this.

RUTH – In [date] I was telephoned and asked if I would go to [prison] on secondment. I just about bit their hands off, because that just sounded like such an interesting job.

JOSHUA – So it wasn't solely being attracted to a management position. I worked in local government for a couple of years, in management services. I'd done that since leaving university and I was looking for, I mean, I was like a lot of people, you know, I was looking for a career direction.

MATTHEW – It provided a fairly sort of hierarchical career structure, cos I'm very, I'm not ambitious as such but needed something that had some length in it, that I could go to a variety of roles and I suppose the fact that it was a public service was appealing to me cos I didn't particularly want to work in the private sector, I was far more interested in working in the public sector, so I think that's why I ended up doing it and it proved to be quite the right sort of thing.

JOHN – I was an engineer, a maintenance engineer, in a factory, and engineering was dying, it was sort of falling around our ears, engineers were ten a penny, many people were being made redundant. All the shipyards were closing, the steelworks were closing and all these trained people were on the dole. And there was a sort of real threat that was going around and suddenly I discovered that the Prison Service was desperately short of engineers.

MATTHEW – I started working at [city prison] in 1994, initially with convicted adult prisoners, the wing re-rolled later on to take remand young prisoners, fifteen to twenty year olds and I just found, I just enjoyed it. I went from a position of thinking I couldn't contemplate any sort of work that involved getting up in the morning to working shift, shift work, and thoroughly enjoying the whole experience.

JOSHUA – ...useful in some way. And I certainly do think managing penal institutions well is a socially useful function and I guess after all this time, I mean I do like the challenges of working with people. I like the challenges that staff present, I do quite enjoy working with offenders.

REBECCA – it was a bit of an anathema really for lots of my peers. Everyone was going, "Why don't you apply for this, apply for that?" So that was it and I started in September 1998 and just went through accelerated promotion, and this is my first in charge posting.

SAMUEL – I crossed over at a time when there was a scheme called the cross hierarchical scheme where other civil servants, people like in probation, had the opportunity to apply to join the Prison Service as Governors.

REBECCA – During my time at university I worked for social services and Probation and worked in hostels and then moved on to doing some drugs work in prisons.

RUTH – I'd been there about two years and I saw the notice about people wanting to go on what was then called the direct entry scheme. It was for people who'd got at least three years management experience to be a junior Governor.

JOSHUA – Doing something that is socially useful. I think that is quite important to a number of us. It is important to me to do something that is meaningful.

JOHN – As soon as I joined I realised I didn't want to be a Prison Service engineer; I wanted to be a Governor.

## **Synthesis**

I came from a nursing background, learning disabilities, working a lot with people who were said to show challenging behaviour. I'd been promoted quickly, and I knew I was a good nurse and a pretty good manager. I had got to the stage where I wanted something different, but didn't particularly want to go up the NHS management ladder. The move to community care and closing the big hospitals was in full sway and while I am in favour of community care in principle, I came across enough instances where it seemed people were worse off to have my doubts. I spent a year running a private home, and that was a dreadful experience. I think we provided good care as far as we were able. But as a place to work it was dreadful. After that I didn't want to work in the private sector again, I wouldn't have chosen to but I was living in a rural community and employment options were limited. I looked around for different things. I'd always enjoyed working in hospitals, despite their downsides; I liked being part of a community, albeit an unusual one. The Prison Service seemed to offer quite a lot that was similar to the health service and that would allow me to use the skills I had already developed. But at the same time, I thought it would present new challenges and I'd be able to move away from nursing where, to be honest, I was getting bored. And there was a local prison I could easily get to by train.

## **Commentary**

Members of the group joined the Prison Service from a variety of backgrounds. Some had had previous managerial experience – Luke in retail, although he comments that this initially put him off pursuing a management career in the Prison Service, and Joshua in local government. Samuel, and Ruth who mentions her early ambition to be a Prison Governor, as cross-hierarchical transfers, already had experience of working in a managerial capacity within prisons. John had been a skilled tradesman and initially joined as an engineer, a friend having suggested that working in the Prison Service might suit him, and had a long involvement in local politics. Both Rebecca and Matthew joined from University. Mark followed what has been a traditional path from the armed services having attended an exit course which presumably gave him some idea of what he was going into. He describes the Prison Service, as another uniformed service, as being within his 'comfort zone'. Rachel, who states she 'knew nothing' about the Prison Service before joining, had previously been an army nurse. In a later interview John made reference to the practice of recruiting from the military, a practice also mentioned by Bryans and Wilson (2000) who refer to the 1922 Hobhouse and Brockway Report as 'highly critical of the military characteristics of Governors even though it recognised that military and naval training undoubtedly develops capacity for organisation and maintenance of discipline.' (p25).

Rachel and John both describe themselves with the words 'people person', I did not pursue this at the time as it seemed an obvious phrase, but on later reflection I started to wonder what it really meant and, in particular, what it meant if one were not a people person. Joshua was attracted by the opportunity to do something 'socially useful' and challenging. For both Luke and John the possibility of comparatively high earnings was attractive – they both joined at a time when Prison Officers could earn considerable amounts of overtime pay. Luke also describes the attraction of something socially useful, and John had already demonstrated that this was important to him through his involvement in local politics. For Ruth her initial move into the Prison Service was founded on the offer of an interesting and attractive job.

Matthew was attracted by the career structure that the Prison Service offered, a wide range of opportunities within one organisation allowing for career longevity without feeling stuck in a rut. As discussed later this is not unproblematic – someone who becomes a Governing Governor in their mid thirties or early forties may find that what had seemed like a wide range of career options seems to have shrunk, unless they wish to move away from operational management. None of the group expressed a wish to do this. This problem is likely to become more common with the use of accelerated promotion schemes to attract 'high flyers' straight from university or early in their careers. The Prison Service runs an Intensive Development Scheme for Graduates although at the time of writing this is closed to new applicants. Information on the Prison Service website (<http://www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk>) suggests that potential recruits ask themselves a series of questions to see if the Prison Service is right for them:

Do I want my work to make a real difference to people's lives?

Do I want to work with people from all walks of life?

Do I want a career where no two days are the same?

Do I want a career with real responsibility early on?

Do I want to progress as high as I can, as fast as I can?

These questions are not specific to the Prison Service and could apply just as well to people considering a career in health service administration, the Civil Service or local government amongst others. Thus, not unreasonably, the Prison Service appears to be recruiting from a wide base and the Governors within this group would all have answered yes to these questions. However, Rebecca did comment that there had been a high rate of attrition from the APS group that she joined with so it may be that there are problems in retaining staff, either to complete the process of training and promotion or to stay in the service once they reach senior management level.

Schemes which allow and encourage recruits to reach positions of comparative seniority at a young age need to consider career longevity, and the possibility that experienced Governors, who are still quite young, may then move out of the Prison Service to take on roles in other areas thus removing their experience and expertise from the resources available within the Prison Service.

Rachel, John, Mark, Luke and Matthew all joined the Prison Service as Prison Officers, John initially as an engineer bringing his previous background and skills into use in a new context. Rebecca, Ruth, Joshua and Samuel joined as managers, though all spent time as Prison Officers as part of their training. Rebecca and Joshua both responded to advertisements for Prison Service managers which seemed to offer them the socially useful careers they were looking for. For Rebecca it was serendipitous that a particular chain of events occurred that led to her seeing the advertisement. She describes feeling that it might be 'quite interesting' and, like others in the group felt that prison work is not a vocation in the same way that, for instance, nursing is sometimes seen to be. Rebecca joined on an Accelerated Promotion scheme, Matthew transferred to Accelerated Promotion after spending time as an Officer, he was finding that working as an Officer could be dull, which suggests that he was looking for a greater challenge. John also transferred to a Governor training scheme, having, as he says, realised very quickly that he wanted to be a Governor.

Apart from Samuel and Ruth who both had Probation experience only Rebecca had previous experience of working in prisons before joining, working in a 'therapeutic' social work context as a drug worker and for social services and probation. Samuel had already worked as part of the Senior Management Team within prisons, as had Ruth, before deciding to apply to join the Prison Service at a time when he felt 'disillusioned' with Probation whereas the Prison Service was becoming increasingly interesting to him.

Thus the Governors in the group joined the Prison Service from a wide range of backgrounds. Matthew had a family member working in the Prison Service at a senior level and may have acquired some knowledge of the

Service from them. None of the Governors describes thinking for a long time about the decision to join, or doing research to find out about the organisation they were joining. This does not, of course, mean that they did not do these things, but it suggests they may not have.

Members of the group had different levels of ambition when they joined the service. Obviously those who joined on Governor training schemes wanted to manage – Joshua, Rebecca and Samuel, who already had managerial experience. Luke initially was not interested in management having been put off by his experience in retail. John very quickly developed an ambition to be a Governor after joining as a Prison Officer. Matthew took an opportunity that was offered at a time when he was finding his work boring. Looking at this in the light of Kempster's model we can see that the Governors either already identified themselves with a leadership role when they joined the service or tended to develop this quite early in their careers and thus to pursue it as an aspiration.

## John's soliloquy

Then there was a sweeping change in the eighties, when people like me were recruited who had to have the potential to rise to Governor 2. That was the, your potential had to be Governor 2 and the training changed dramatically. The training changed and focused on business, on managing. You know '*The Empty Raincoat*' [Charles Handy] was the best-selling book amongst managers at the time when people were going on lecture tours and talking management style. Very little leadership I notice.

Very much on management style, and on process, on delivery. But very, I felt, very process oriented and that's how the service has developed, as a very process oriented thing, you know. We have instructions and if people deviate from them then they are seen as deviants as opposed to being seen as visionaries. And I think that's an interesting concept, when does thinking outside the box become dangerous? At what point does it become dangerous? At what point do you become ineffective because you disagree with a policy?

And the number of Governors who have been removed for political reasons and we saw the, the managerial control that was displayed by the home secretary, Michael Howard. Huge sort of political meddler, interferer in operational things who would swear on a stack of Bibles of course that he never did, but the number of Governors who were removed from post as a result of that.

People run through at a phenomenal pace now. They fall over very quickly now unfortunately and they leave the service in their droves because this is just another managerial step on the CV. It's not seen as a vocation, as a career any more. And it's also a growth industry alongside that, to be fair, with the private sector and that, there are issues that sort of take people sideways into the private sector. What we've seen is the, this sort of growth.

There seems to come a point in time where Prison Governors do have to have a political voice as well. A political stance, and you have to say what's right, and people have to take a stance and say 'well I can't and won't deliver.' I mean there are issues where if the Area Manager said to me I'm

going to cut your budget by so much I'd have to say 'Well, I won't be able to deliver. Tell me what it is that we can't deliver and I'll tell you whether that's acceptable.' I will only take out things that are acceptable. I won't deny prisoners' rights. I would make a stance at that point because that's what's got to be a right thing to do, there has to be, I think, a level of morality.

And I think it's about, there has to be a moral stance as well, and I think Governors have got to have that sort of capacity not to be afraid. I'm very pleased that for the first time our political lords and masters have taken the shackles off us. Before it was an offence to talk to the press without having clearance. Now of course they're encouraging it, because we have a lot of good stories to tell.

### **Commentary**

In this passage John points to a change in recruitment and training practice for Governors that took place during the 1980s when, like other areas of public service, the Prison Service developed a focus on management, adopting managerial approaches based on private sector business practice and aimed at running prisons more in the style of businesses. John comments that this led to a lack of focus on the role of Governors as leaders. It can also be argued that it led to a lessening of opportunity for individuality and creativity as central control and regulation was tightened. John links this to increased political control, citing Michael Howard as a particularly controlling Home Secretary. Howard was Home Secretary during the well-known Bulger case which led to increased importance being given to crime and responses to crime as political issues. John suggests that Howard exercised a high degree of personal control over areas of judicial and penal practice, including the appointment and removal of prison Governors.

Linked to this increasing control are the two challenging issues that John raises as rhetorical questions. When does thinking outside the box become dangerous – at what point does a visionary become a deviant? And at what point does disagreeing with policy render a Governor ineffective? Governors are expected to be 'visionary', to develop and implement a

vision for the development of a prison, but this has to remain within largely unspecified parameters. There are certain known factors that contribute to determining those parameters, such as decency, security, budget restraints; but other more subtle influences are at play including such things as the need not to cause embarrassment to politicians which Samuel mentioned in his first interview, and which is also discussed by Bryans and Wilson (2000).

An example of this can be found in the story of Eoin MacLennan-Murray, which I alluded to in the commentary on my first self-interview. Murray's innovative methods in resettlement at Blantyre House prison brought him into conflict with his Area Manager, Tom Murtaugh, who removed him from his position as Governing Governor of the prison and raided the prison expecting to find considerable amounts of contraband. A Home Affairs select committee subsequently praised MacLennan-Murray's approach to resettlement and other prisons now adopt similar practices to encourage prisoners to develop personal responsibility and prepare for their return to the community (Ramsbotham, 2003; Frascarelli, 2008). As Joshua told me, Governors are constantly aware of the risks involved in this but prisoners on resettlement regimes have to make a case for being accepted by specialised resettlement prisons and their personal investment is considerable.

John suggests that managerial approaches within the Prison Service have resulted in the recruitment of potential Governors who view their time in the Service as a way into a management career, rather than a career, or vocation, in itself. Governorship is seen as a stepping stone, rather than an ultimate aim. This echoes comments by some of the younger Governors I met who, though deeply committed to their Governing careers felt that at some point they would have to consider their futures as, although the Prison Service could provide a degree of career longevity, this might be insufficient to sustain them through another twenty or more years. They did not see themselves continually moving to bigger and more complex prisons over that sort of period. This has in some part been addressed by the Optimising Potential exercise, discussed later, which, amongst other

elements, aimed to identify those Governors with the potential to become senior civil servants in the future. It is important for the Prison Service, if it is to retain its most able Governors, to give thought to how their interest and motivation can be sustained over the length of their career. Strategies for this might include such things as placements outside the service to allow Governors to work, learn from, and share ideas with leaders and managers from other areas of the public, private and voluntary sectors.

John links politics with morality, suggesting that Governors may have to take a political stance if, for example, budget cuts were introduced that could have a detrimental effect on the care given to prisoners, such as obliging staff to deny prisoners their rights. Here he raises issues of role ambiguity and conflict which form part of Brun and Cooper's model. John does not elaborate on what he means by prisoners' rights and this could be open to individual interpretation such that some Governors were more amenable to regime restriction than others. John sees this very much as a moral issue and that Governors should be willing to speak out. He notes that Governors are now allowed to speak to the press without clearance, because they have positive stories to tell. It will be interesting to see how this situation develops as Governors deal with the across the board budget cuts introduced for the three years beginning 2008. John's reference to not being afraid suggests that Governors may be taking a risk by speaking out. Indeed during our conversations he referred on several occasions to the poor treatment meted out to another Governor who had been somewhat of a thorn on the Prison Service's side due to his willingness to speak out on issues.

## **Rehearsals**

INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

PROFESSIONAL

CHANGE

BUSINESS

MANAGEMENT

EXAMPLE

PREPARATION

POTENTIAL

LEADERSHIP

PERSONALITY

JOHN – ...they saw it as a vocation. Then there was a sweeping change in the eighties, when people like me were recruited who had to have the potential to rise to Governor 2. That was the, your potential had to be Governor 2. And the training changed dramatically. The training changed and focused on business, on managing.

JOSHUA – The service has a terrible reputation that we promote to the level that you can't handle and that's the level you stay at. We promote to a level of incompetence almost. We don't let people stay and become competent.

JOHN – It's about preparation for promotion as opposed to promotion and then prepare which is the way we've operated for some time. And I think what we've got to do is move towards preparation for promotion and doing it differently. At the moment we set people up to fail and then we deal with the failure, then we manage the failure by which time we have destroyed an individual, we certainly have dented confidence, at the least we'll have dented confidence, we'll have lowered morale.

Instead of taking someone and saying 'we're gonna take this thing' we're gonna work you through and when we're happy that you've got all the basic skills, and some advanced skills possibly, but when we're happy you've got those skills then you're ready to move up the next step.'

It's not done on the basis of did you wear the right tie when you went for the interview? Did you impress in that first thirty seconds when you walked in the door or did you lose it, kick the chair over, knock the glass of water over the chairman's papers and forget what day it was?

SAMUEL – My training was very mixed. There was one, I think it was called Senior Managers' Development Programme. Once we'd been through the Suitable To Be In Charge we were then enrolled on the Senior Operational Managers' Programme and some of that was very useful. There were some elements of that programme that were very good because it made you sit and reflect on what you thought your leadership style was and what your management style was. I did most of that when I was a Deputy Governor. I'm not sure that I consciously refer to it now.

RUTH – We had a day, there's now a programme for new Governors, which I think is a good idea, so we had a day at headquarters and Michael Spurr came to talk to us and Phil Wheatley came to talk to us but they both said the same thing because they hadn't compared scripts beforehand. And the head of security group came, head of efficiency group, so there was quite a few of the great and good came, which was good, really good. And then we had two days at Newbold Revel with the development training group, and bits of that were good. We had a discussion with two Governors, one of whom had been in post about a year and the other had been in post about twenty years and that was really good, comparing things.

SAMUEL – When I became a Governor, they've introduced some form of training for Governing Governors, three day-long seminars. One was at headquarters where we met various people and they talked about their roles and the pressures that were facing the service. All kind of good, interesting stuff; and then we had a residential weekend down at Newbold Revel. There were various presentations, and all that was quite good. The best thing was just meeting people in the same position as you, cos you step into this and you're presumed to know and actually you haven't got a clue. And you don't get any time really; as soon as you walk through the door the staff think, "Well you're the Governor."

RUTH – We had some more specific, somebody came from equality action. And then we had this dire session on 'am I the sort of Governor I thought I would be?' And I was doing this and I hadn't even thought about the sort of Governor I was going to be, I didn't have time to think about it. I met somebody not long ago and he said, "Ooh that was awful, wunnit?" and I said I didn't think it was awful and he said, "Too many people there wanting to be Area Managers." And when he said that I thought, "Yeah, he's right actually."

JOHN – We've also got this JSAC [job simulation] process which is by no means perfect and allows people who know what it is that they should say to say it and tick the box as opposed to walking the job, doing the job, living the job and really assimilating. People know the script; they know what they have to say. And what you should do is you should test people

before they move on. The JSAC is too short a time to really test. And when you look at why there are discrepancies in success rates between certain groups it's because some groups have had JSAC preparation and some groups haven't.

REBECCA – The senior operational JSAC – one has to pass to become a senior manager and, they did a series of workshops after you passed to help you prepare, and it was a bit like being at secondary, or attending reception class at primary school again. It was like, “For God’s sake, come on.” One of the exercises, this was the final straw. I didn’t go to any more after this one, but one of the exercises we had to do was to list all the stakeholders with which we had relationships. So you think, “Oh fuck that’s tedious.” Which actually makes you feel a tad devalued, that they’re not, actually at senior management, they can’t actually take an individual needs analysis.

JOHN – New in post Governors are offered a mentor and they offered me a choice of people most of whom had either been driven out of the service because of their strange activities, or I felt were not the sort of role models that I would ever want anyway. And I said, “No, I’d rather choose someone from outside the Service.” I had a look around and it occurred to me that probably the one person who I had learnt a lot of my skills from through our paths crossing and interweaving was [retired Governor]. And he just seemed the ideal person and someone I could trust, because mentoring is a particular thing that requires complete trust between the two people. So that’s how it came about. So I asked if he would do it; he was interviewed by the people who manage this and they said, “Yes, he’s ideal.” So that was it, end of story. And I see him a minimum of four times a year when we get a chance to go over things. And it’s been very positive inasmuch as it’s someone who has no vested interests and therefore gives a non-judgemental view. So it’s good. It works for me, put it that way.

REBECCA – We do offer the Masters’ at Cambridge of course which is about criminology. There is a bit about doing an MBA, you know I think there’s probably aspects about doing an MBA that would be useful but, to be honest, I just don’t know how you would fit it in. I increasingly believe

there is an overestimation of what are reasonable hours to work and to have to do some prolonged studying on top of your job, I wouldn't do it.

RACHEL – By the time I've done a day at work I've done enough thinking.

REBECCA – No, I wouldn't do it. I put myself down for this leadership course and the deadline was missed, and to be fair I wasn't that bothered. It would have been nice to do it, but actually the stress of trying to keep your hours down to 55 a week, it's really hard.

RUTH – I learnt a lot from [another Governor]. I think you learn from everyone you work with. I've learnt from every single Governor that I've worked with, good ones and bad ones.

REBECCA – I think becoming a Governor is one of those things you prepare yourself for because in the seven years I've been in the Service I've watched other people and some of it's been good and some of it's been negative learning, "I'm not doing it like that." So you accumulate the hard stuff, the competencies and then you learn and develop the softer stuff, the leadership stuff by watching other people and seeing what works.

JOSHUA – From the bad stuff you try to take the good stuff out and think, "well, I won't do that," or, "I won't make that mistake."

MARK – There is definitely things that I have learnt along the way where I've seen certain things handled in certain ways where I've thought, "that was really good, I'll put that in my armoury." That in the event that situation or something similar arises then I would use the same methodology. But not necessarily.

REBECCA – There are opportunities and I haven't availed myself of them. We get information sent on a regular basis about other training that's available in London and at Newbold Revel. We've started to get loads of emails I've had a look at some of them. But there's always the travelling and the time and part of me thinks, "I don't have any massive gaps."

MATTHEW – They're putting a lot of effort into it now, and it does make you feel better about your job. Just the opportunity to sit down with other senior managers and do the round the periphery chat stuff is really useful

because it helps you to sort of benchmark your behaviour and your attitudes and other things, And it is, it's useful.

REBECCA – They're one day master classes so you're not dragging something out longer than it has to be. Quite condensed sessions which I suppose, which quite attracts me really cos I can't bear the thought of being in one place for two or three days. One's about leadership which is something you want to keep refreshing yourself on even though you've gone on leadership courses.

JOSHUA – There's been this Optimising Potential which I've found that, in a lot of ways, there's been some interesting parts. It's always interesting doing 360 degree and things like that but there is a sort of background to it which is a fairly blunt assessment of what level are you going to get to. Are you capable of this? Are you capable of that? And actually that's how things finish. Has got the potential to do this grade and that grade. Hasn't got the potential to do this that and the other. And personally I think it's been done a bit bluntly and a little bit insensitively for some people.

RUTH – I resisted for a while and then they said, "Well you'll have to do it now because otherwise you'll miss out completely." So I did it and I did it all in quite a hurry. And I sent out the questionnaires for the 360 and I filled in the other stuff in a great hurry. And after I'd filled it in, one night I couldn't get on-line and I'd had a very stressful day and I had to do this bloody thing and eventually I got on line and I did it and I was feeling very negative and I sent it off. But anyway when it came back I thought it was pretty accurate. And the psychologist, she gave me feedback and it was pretty spot on really. It certainly wasn't a negative experience.

JOSHUA – Part of the assessment for all the Governors is 'Do you have the potential to join the senior Civil Service?', and so I would imagine for a lot of Governors it's simply no. So in my case it's no. I don't have long enough left and I have no interest and I wouldn't get that upset that I'm not seen as a senior Civil Servant.

MATTHEW – Under the continuing professional development umbrella I've just got a load of assessments through on line that I've got to complete

as part of Optimising Potential which is basically continuing professional development for senior managers. So it's happening. They're putting resources into it. I must admit, because it's only my second day back I haven't been through the stuff they sent me on line, but it's sort of 360 degree reports, it's psychometrics. And then they will look at that, look at where the gaps are. What I'm good at, what I'm not good at and start trying to put some development opportunities in place for me to work on the bits that I need developing. And it does look really good, and joined up, and sensible.

RUTH – It's interesting really. It started soon after I got here and I thought I haven't got time for this. I haven't got time to fill in questionnaires. I really was quite resentful of it.

JOSHUA – It's a change for the service to assess people in quite this way, to me it smacks of really good 'man management' practice – no shilly shallying about, we're just going to say that's how it is and that's where you are, and to me life's not like that, deterministic, that's a good word, and one of the things for me about the process was why isn't there any recognition that people would be thinking these things through for themselves?

MARK – We can always receive training in regards to communication skills and interview skills et cetera but no matter what happens with that I believe that people's individual personalities come through in the end. And I don't think that's a bad thing.

## **Synthesis**

There wasn't much training as such before I was promoted; you pick stuff up by seeing how Governors you work with deal with things, good and bad; and by talking things through. You get the chance to act up while the Number One is on holiday or away. That's an opportunity you can try to make the most of.

Bits of the new Governor course were good. It's hard to judge though because when you're just promoted you don't know what you might need, what might be useful. And some aspects of the job might be more interesting to you so you're likely to pay more attention to those. There's so much stuff you might need to know that it can feel overwhelming, so you have to sift through it a bit. You have to rely on other people to tell you what you need to know.

The CPD [continuing professional development] stuff that's coming out has some interesting looking bits, it's good that the Prison Service has started to look at CPD and at ways of meeting individual training needs by providing a self-selection facility. I've signed up for some courses but I have to be choosy because it's time away from the prison so I feel I really have to justify the investment especially as I'm quite new here and I'm aware that I need to try and bring a sense of stability and if I keep going off and doing courses people might think I'm just looking for promotion.

Yes, I did the Optimising Potential exercise. In some ways I think it was a bit early for me to be doing it as it's only a few months since I got promotion. I can be a bit sceptical of those kinds of psychometric things but it was quite interesting to do, having a bit of background in psychology it's interesting to see how it's used. I'm inclined to take it with a pinch of salt. It's okay as long as it's not seen as a one-off exercise but as part of a continuing process of career development. I also worry a bit that it might be a way of taking control of our careers.

In a way I think it's a shame that training and development is so focused on the job. There could be some attention paid to things that maybe aren't obviously relevant but can help with things like problem solving and

decision making and encouraging people to think more widely rather than getting stuck in a particular cultural framework.

One of the best things is just to meet up with other Governors and talk about things. Then you know you're not the only one.

## **Commentary**

John gives some historical context to Governor training when he points to changes that occurred as part of the cultural change in the 1980s which saw the introduction of a business like, managerialist model in the Prison Service, as in other areas of the public sector, and a move away from the idea that governing was a vocation. He suggests that at this time recruitment was based on perceived potential such that people were no longer recruited for a particular role but because they were seen as having the potential to progress to a certain level. This contrasts with earlier recruitment practice as described by, for example, Grew (1958) who joined the Prison Service as a Governor following a career in the armed services.

Both John and Joshua feel that the Prison Service has a tendency to promote people to the level of incompetency; Joshua seems to be suggesting that once a person demonstrates competence at a particular level they are pushed to move on to the next rather than being encouraged to stay where they are and consolidate their skills. John suggests that development and training would be improved if more training was given before promotion, by training for promotion rather than promotion then training. New Governors would take up post knowing that they had skills and knowledge for the post rather than that they were believed to have the potential to do the job but needed training. John also suggests that the job simulation [JSAC] tests which are used to assess the competence of potential candidates for promotion are flawed in that coaching can help people give the right responses and that the process is too short to really assess aptitude and ability for a role as complex as that of Governing Governor.

Several of the Governors describe attending a course for new Governors. Under John's suggestion this training would take place before promotion to Governing Governor and once it had been completed satisfactorily individuals would be considered eligible for promotion. Reactions to this initial training were mixed. Rachel, in her unrecorded interview described her experience as 'dire'. Both Ruth and Rebecca point to areas they felt were of little use, with Rebecca commenting on the lack of provision geared to individual needs. Luke also commented in an unrecorded

interview on the lack of individually focused training. All of those who commented valued the opportunity to meet other new Governors and Ruth additionally appreciated presentations by Governors at different stages of their careers. This can help in framing one's performance, hearing from and meeting other Governors helps to create one's image of the role one is taking on. The same can apply to Ph.D. researchers; meeting other researchers at different stages of their careers and reading other Ph.D.s helps to create a picture of what a Ph.D. is – and what it might be for you.

Ruth, Rebecca and John spoke of mentors whose support they valued. John offers a description of the quality of relationship between mentor and Governor, emphasising trust, honesty and disinterested concern. Samuel says that his relationship with his Area Manager is of such a quality that he feels this is in effect a mentoring as well as a managerial and supervisory relationship. Interestingly the relationship characteristics that John mentions in terms of mentoring are also found in good relationships between Governors and their Deputies, discussed later in the scene on support for Governors.

All of the Governors spoke about learning through observation and experience, in both positive and negative ways. For Luke this was the source of most of his training, and all members of the group regarded it as important in their development as they moved towards taking on their first in charge postings. Kempster (2009) emphasises this aspect of leadership learning together with experiential learning which Luke highlighted in our first meeting. Both Matthew and Samuel comment in the scene focused on becoming a Governing Governor on the opportunities they had to act up for Governing Governors when they were Deputies. This gave them the opportunity to rehearse the role before they were expected to fully occupy it. Other Governors such as Mark speak of filing things away as examples of good or bad practice. Potentially Governors could be given greater opportunity to share experiences and discuss ways of dealing with particular issues and problems through, for example, informal seminar-type gatherings. However, one problem with this would be that it could take Governors away from the prison, something they expressed reluctance

about. An associated problem for some Governors is that training opportunities tend to be centralised either in London or at the Prison Service College near Rugby which involves considerable travel and overnight stays for Governors located, for example, in the north of England.

Towards the end of the period when I was meeting with the Governors the Prison Service introduced a programme of one day courses for Governors which were offered on a self-select basis. The Governors were generally enthusiastic about this although again, for some, the travel involved and the associated time away from the prison were factors which limited the degree to which they felt able to avail themselves of this. Luke felt that it indicated that training was becoming more professional with greater opportunities for CPD.

During my meeting with Susan Brookes at Prison Service Headquarters we discussed professional development and she said that she was interested in looking at the possibilities of offering Governors the chance to study for a modular MBA that would cover both general material and items specific to the prison service. Rachel and Rebecca commented that they would not want to attempt to pursue postgraduate level study in addition to their existing workload.

A final aspect of learning and development that Governors took part in towards the end of our meetings was the Optimising Potential programme which was described to me by Luke as a number of psychometric exercises designed to assess Governors' potential to progress as Governors and, potentially, as senior civil servants. This project involved Alison Bain whose Ph.D. research was mentioned earlier. Reactions to it were mixed. Rachel felt that for her it had been an 'expensive waste of time' that had not contributed to her career development. Joshua found it to be in some ways a negative experience, largely due to what he felt was an element of insensitivity in the approach. Ruth spoke about the problem of finding time to complete the assessments on top of a heavy workload, but she felt it had been quite useful. Matthew is positive about it, seeing it as representing an improvement in approaches to career development. Overall it seems that this can be a useful tool but greater sensitivity may need to be used in what

can seem to be an impersonal set of assessments that can have a considerable impact on Governors.

In the final extract Mark makes an important point about individual personalities. Different people are suited to different roles, including managing different types of prisons. Matching individual Governors to appropriate positions is an important part of career and succession planning; a Governor who works less well in one environment may shine in another. Thus, as Joshua and Rebecca in particular emphasise, it is important to gear training and development to individuals.

The Governors' comments link well with Kempster's view of leadership training. There is much in management that can be taught but leadership skills are acquired through observation, practice and reflection. Several members of the group talk about key people who have influenced them during their careers, while all mention learning from others. The opportunity to practice in a protected environment, by acting up for the Governor or being appointed Acting Governor was also seen as valuable in that it gives greater insight into the role and a chance for rehearsal.

From the perspective of well-being the Governors generally appreciate the improving opportunity for professional development, although Rebecca and Joshua suggest that failure to look at individual needs and personalities can leave Governors feeling 'devalued' and not respected. Giving Governors choice in which short courses to attend does suggest respect for their ability to judge their own training needs, but the problem of location lessens the ability of some to make full use of courses available.

In our first meeting Rachel told me she would appreciate the opportunity to share training with public sector organisations other than the Prison Service, and to spend time on secondment to see how other organisations deal with issues and allow her to develop a fresh perspective. This type of opportunity could perhaps be tied in with giving Deputy Governors the chance to act up for the Governor for an extended period.

## **First Nights and Stage Fright**

APPREHENSIVE

PROUD

DESKILLED

WELL PREPARED

SUPPORTED

UNDER INFORMED

RESPONSIBILITY

DIFFERENT

CONFIDENT

LIBERATING

MARK – No, never, in fact the rank I always wanted to get to was principal officer because I thought, you know, that, well, I can probably reach that. And when I actually became Governor of [this prison] there, there was a degree of trepidation if I'm brutally honest, it was a bit, "Oh gosh, can I actually do this?"

RUTH – I always knew that I didn't want to uproot my family. I wasn't prepared to chase jobs around the country so I recognised that would mean I would have to sit tight and wait.

REBECCA – I think, probably, that's the one thing I suppose is quite striking, is the level of responsibility. Whereas as a Deputy Governor, you know, ultimately the buck stopped with the Governor and I suppose subconsciously I must have known that.

MATTHEW – I've been here six months, I was Deputy at [another prison], which is just up the road. I had three and a half months temporary promotion to Governing Governor there, which was really useful, that was a really, really useful opportunity cos it is slightly different not having someone there to refer to. I tried not to, and didn't refer very often to my then line manager.

JOHN – I knew the system inside out. I had a good tutor in [previous boss], who, incidentally, is my mentor now.

MATTHEW – There's certainly additional pressures of responsibility. I find myself dealing less with the internal operations of the prison, far more looking outside the prison to the wider community, doing sort of influencing. We're all used to having sort of hierarchical control over things, and then, that exists all the way through the organisation until you get to Governing Governor level and then you sort of turn round, look out, and you can't exercise that kind of control and it becomes far more about influencing people, about networking, about communicating your priorities to people and encouraging them to take those into account.

REBECCA – Sometimes you know, when you have really good days and it all seems fine, it's great fun and then when things are kind of, become a bit challenging, you just think, "Oh my God, this is such a big job" you kind of

think, “Oh this is a bit grown up.” It’s kind of like having your first mortgage, you know what I mean.

MARK – My sort of baggage of experience, if you like, would give me that snippet of knowledge in regard to that. I think it’s important to say that I wasn’t left alone to drift along, you know. I received brilliant support from managers that were there.

REBECCA – Nobody tells you how to do it either. So nobody said, “This is what it’s gonna be like; this is what we expect of you; this is the timescale we expect you to do it.” So, um, at the moment, it feels, I felt deskilled and it feels like a huge job. But it won’t stay like that, I know it won’t.

MATTHEW – It’s a bit different, it is a bit different. People always say it’s really lonely being a Governor. I haven’t found that to be the case. Certainly before I came here it was presented to me as some sort of, you know, there was some alchemy in it somewhere.

REBECCA – One of my colleagues, I was at a conference and I said, you know, “God, I just want to feel competent again.” She said to me, “You never do as a Governor, Rebecca, because there’s always something else.” You just don’t know what you’re going to deal with any one day and there’s so many new things coming up and I suppose one of the great things about the Service is that your days are very different cos they are unpredictable.

JOHN – I was more than prepared for it, in that respect because just the sheer experience. I’d covered every, I was lucky; I’d covered every single functional head post. And I felt that I was ready for it, but what I wasn’t ready for, I think, was the isolation. I wasn’t quite ready for that isolation, working away from home. In terms of the training and the preparation I was probably over trained and over prepared.

RUTH – I felt the time was right and I applied for the job.

JOSHUA – You never actually know until you do it but, I mean, I think I’d had enough experience in all sorts of capacities, you know, you learn a

great deal about how to do things from being in situations and learning from people who don't do them very well.

RUTH – It was a big change. I'd thought about it and I'd talked to other people about it. People say that when you walk in and you realise you're in charge, that it does feel very different.

SAMUEL – I covered a lot when I was Deputy Governor, I had frequent periods of acting up. But there was always the Number One Governor, there was always someone that I could contact. So it is different, yeah. Probably more different actually is the change of jails.

JOHN – I'd always thought it wasn't going to happen for me. I'd always thought that I'd be the best Governor that never was. This is what I'd worked towards, being a Governing Governor, so it didn't really matter where it was, the answer was going to be yes. It would have been extremely naïve to say "No." I don't think I would ever have got an offer again.

MARK – I was quite confident then with actually speaking to staff with regard to different areas of operation within the establishment so I was confident that I could deal with the areas of work that staff were involved in.

REBECCA – I suppose I just knew I was ready to run my own place when I just kept wishing the Governor was on leave so I could just get on with it.

JOSHUA – So I had a long preparation for it and actually when I was in charge, you know, completely, you know, had a first command if you like, I know I was ready for it and felt quite comfortable in coming in and doing it.

RUTH – I didn't have much time to prepare. I was determined to come in and establish myself. I had some anxieties because having worked here before I think I'd got some allies, but I'd certainly got some people who wouldn't necessarily be on my side.

LUKE – Moving from Deputy to Governor was liberating for me. I was able to use my own discretion instead of having to second guess the Governor; I had my own team to delegate to.

MARK – You know, the self doubt. What have I let myself in for? A realisation that the buck stops here. I was actually quite comfortable with it because of my experience in the service that I'd, I won't say I'm an expert in any field, that would be totally wrong to say that, but I have a sprinkling of knowledge.

JOHN – It was disappointing because I quickly realised that it didn't have anywhere near the span of control as being the Deputy Governor at [previous prison].

MARK – A feeling of pride, that I'd actually achieved that, that position.

JOSHUA – I think, you know, I said I joined in eighty two, I was a direct entrant, I joined as a Governor grade, in lots of ways I think I probably would have expected to be a Governing Governor before I was. This was my first in charge posting.

RACHEL – Pride in what I had achieved, I like having my own prison.

RUTH – Choppy, it's been choppy.

## **Synthesis**

When I was first promoted to Governing Governor I felt pretty confident in my abilities, although I'd never dreamed when I first joined the Prison Service – that was way back, in 1988 – that I would ever get this far, especially joining as a young woman. The ceiling wasn't glass then, it was reinforced concrete! But I'd had a lot of experience in different prisons and taking on lots of different roles: head of residence, security, regimes, as well as spending some time at Headquarters so I felt I knew a fair bit. I'd acted up for the Governor at my last prison too, when he was on holiday or at conferences, courses. Then he got promoted so I acted up for three months while they found a replacement. I couldn't put in for that post because it's not one you're going to get on first posting, but I acted up for three months. That was really good experience. I always knew that the Area Manager was there and that I could call on him for advice if I needed, though I tried not to – I guess I wanted to test myself a bit. When you're the Deputy you actually do a lot of the day to day running of the prison. It can get a bit frustrating because you have to try and do things the way the Governor would want. The big difference is that when you are really the Governing Governor the buck really stops with you, and that can be scary. Suddenly you're responsible for all this stuff, there's the physical stuff – maintaining the buildings, making sure the resources are in place to deliver regimes and programmes – and food and all that. Of course you delegate a lot of it so it's not as if you have to be thinking about it all of the time, but you're still responsible in the end. Then there's the targets – the Prison Service is very much into targets. And on top of that there's the really challenging stuff to do with managing people. Prisoners and staff, and relatives. And then there's the outside business. You have to work with all the partner organisations: health, police, the local community, you become kind of a figurehead. And of course when you're negotiating with them you can't just impose your will, you're a pretty small fish in their pond, so there's a whole new set of skills. The hardest thing was discovering that there was all this new stuff, and you know you were a good Deputy so you really want to prove yourself as a Governor.

## **Commentary**

Most of the Governors who comment say they felt well prepared for becoming Governing Governors. John, Joshua, Samuel and Mark mention their range of experience as being of importance in this. Apart from Samuel and Ruth, they had all been in the Prison Service for some years prior to promotion. Samuel and Ruth were familiar with the Prison Service before joining from extended secondments from the Probation Service. Samuel also mentions opportunities to act up in the absence of the Governor of his previous jail as having been useful experience. Similarly, Matthew comments on the usefulness of his period as acting Governor at his previous jail, which gave him a chance to work as Governor in a relatively safe, protected context. These comments indicate that the opportunity to rehearse for a role is useful – working as an understudy and being given the chance to actually perform the role.

Rebecca's comments also suggest that having coped well during the Governor's absence is a gauge as to how well-prepared Deputies feel for Governing Governor posts. However, she found the adjustment quite difficult and it is clear that she feels that she was underprepared largely because she does not feel she was well-informed about the nature of the position she was moving into and the additional responsibilities she would be taking on; she was given insufficient information about her new and extended role. It may also be that moving to a new prison on promotion contributes to this feeling as not only do the Governors have to take on a new role; they also have to do this in a new setting. This point is made by Samuel when he says that it was the change of jails, rather than the actual promotion that he found difficult. In Rebecca's case, as for John, this involved moving to an area of the country with which she was unfamiliar. John feels the distance from his family and the lack of that support – he has lost his supportive friends and family from his work-based role set. Ruth also alludes to this when she comments on her unwillingness to uproot her family which meant she had waited longer than she otherwise might have to apply for an in-charge post.

Neither Mark nor John had expected to become Governing Governors. Mark had aspired to a Principal Officer post, initially seeing governorship

as beyond his reach. He expresses his pride in reaching this position, as does Rachel. John feels that things were more complex in his case, that entrenched attitudes towards particular groups slowed his progress (this is not dealt with explicitly here to preserve anonymity). Rachel also commented on this in her unrecorded interview saying that she felt that she was disadvantaged as a woman in a predominantly male environment and that it had been suggested to her that she used sex to gain promotion. "Who did you shag to get that job?" She felt that she had been judged against different criteria from those used for her male colleagues, and that she had had to perform consistently to a higher standard. It is apparent that Governors feel that diversity issues are important in making appointments – in dramatic terms, casting decisions.

Ruth comments on the particular situation of returning as Governing Governor to a prison that she had previously worked at and having to deal with a reputation that had built up during her earlier time at the prison and the positive and negative aspects of that. We also talked about this in terms of moving from a supporting role in a play to a major role in the same play and of being accepted in that new position and bringing one's own identity to it, while shaking off aspects of the identity 'footprint' left behind years earlier.

Matthew also draws attention to the differences between the role of Deputy and of Governing Governor in suggesting that the latter is a more outward looking role and necessitates learning new skills, particularly of negotiation, and relinquishing the ability to impose decisions, which is explicitly part of the strong hierarchical authority structure which operates within prisons. And, indeed, throughout the Prison Service as a whole. These new demands bring an additional complexity to the roles which Governing Governors have to perform in their working lives. They are performing on new, unfamiliar and often more public stages. Governors are able to some extent to decide for themselves how much of their time is focused internally on the prison and how much outside, but they will all find themselves having to negotiate with external partners such as Primary

Care Trusts for the provision of health care, education providers, etc. which they may not have had much, if any, experience of as Deputies.

The transition from Deputy to Governing Governor thus involves moving into a public arena, in addition to changing the role played within the establishment. The Governing Governor's role within the establishment becomes more interpretational and directorial, much of the visible, productive performance aspect of running the prison is delegated but the Governing Governor retains the responsibility for coordinating and facilitating the overall creative vision. He or she is also the public face of the prison and so must feel that they can rely on those they delegate to perform in ways they are happy to be held accountable for. In a later interview Rachel commented that during her first in charge posting she had tended to want to run everything and had been reluctant to delegate, describing herself as a 'frustrated Deputy'. Rebecca expressed similar feelings. Matthew, on the other hand, felt comfortable quite early on with not having to 'know everything' but rather having to know who knew, and be able to understand what they had to say. Experience in a wide range of functional head roles allows Governors to direct those who fill these posts using their own knowledge of the role, although there could be a risk of over-imposing a single view. Mangham's (2001) study of Lee Iacocca's taking over the Chrysler Car Company shows that this can be an effective, and indeed necessary, approach where there are problems with the business, although all of the Governors stressed that they work collaboratively with their staff. Looking at this from a slightly different perspective we can look at the role of ritual – used here to mean repeated behaviours that become almost automatic, actions we can carry out almost without conscious thought. Within any role there are likely to be certain elements that become ritualised – John referred to this in a later interview with regard to non-operational staff. The greater complexity and uncertainty of the Governor's role means that there is less of this ritualised work and, as Rebecca in particular points out, this can lead to stress.

In addition to this more creative role within establishments Governors also take on additional responsibilities in negotiating with, and networking

amongst, external organisations. They may find themselves constrained in negotiations in part because they are at best one amongst equals having to try to negotiate a sense of priority for the prison amongst the competing demands that external partners face; or, indirectly, as a result of strategic and budgetary limitations under which those bodies themselves work. Seen as an additional aspect of the performed role of the Governor these external performances can present particular difficulties in that new Governors are likely to have had comparatively little, if any, opportunity for a rehearsal before being expected to play them for real (Mangham, 2001).

In general the group felt well-prepared for their roles as Governing Governors. Although this did not prevent a certain amount of trepidation, which might be thought of as stage fright, as expressed by Mark. This may have been associated with his expectations for his career – that he was surprised to reach the level he did, as he does feel competent in his abilities. No matter how well prepared one is there is always the chance that something unforeseen will happen. Rebecca suggests this is both a positive and negative aspect of the job, that not knowing what might turn up can both bring interest and excitement and make it hard to feel competent and assured. The importance of experience as part of preparation for the role is stressed, and part of this is learning from others, both positively and negatively. Wide ranging and in-depth experience may have helped to remove the idea that there is something mystical and ‘alchemical’ about the role as Matthew puts it.

## **Samuel's soliloquy**

The extent to which some of the women in here will go to either to hurt themselves or indeed to try and kill themselves is extraordinary. That's something I'd never come across. I'd heard about it though. You have to actually see it.

Well, I mean, some of them will just go to phenomenal lengths to try and kill themselves, by trying to choke, put a ligature on, and I mean whatever demons drive them to do that, you know. And I suppose that's the other, the other bit that you get struck by, is, I mean the men [at my previous prison] have all been convicted, and I can't remember a time when I didn't think that we were locking up the right people.

Occasionally, there would be the occasional person I would, especially if they had mental health problems, sort of think, this is the wrong place, I think that much more often here.

I wonder what the hell is going on when the courts send some people here, either on remand or indeed on conviction. I mean a lot of women have mental health problems. We get people sent here who, not many but there's been a few since I came here, who have such incredible special needs, I mean they are child-like. They may be nineteen, twenty but they're operating at the level of a seven or eight year old. And it's quite pathetic to see. And so you wonder what, you know, we're just a dumping ground.

There's very little chance of moving them somewhere more appropriate, we try all the time, try all the time. And there's some great people here that really work very, very hard on that. I mean they're a good bunch of staff here, really good. I mean people work very, very hard here to look after them, try and find the right places, try and plan their release, try and get them out occasionally. It's hard work because once they're here, as far as the courts are concerned that's that matter dealt with.

I have to say, also, that can sometimes be the attitude of the Probation Service and Social Services, and the mental health outreach. Most people don't want the people we've got here, because they're difficult, demanding, prone to self harm. It is frustrating, we work hard at it. But we do have

successes, by, even if it means, and I have done it, putting someone in a taxi with a member of staff and taking them to Social Services and walking into Social Services and asking to see somebody [unclear] which I regard as outrageous, the lack of response from a certain Social Service department, mainly because they don't want to take our prisoners.

Crazy.

I think I'm still coming to terms with it, still working it through.

It's a massive culture shock.

### **Commentary**

Samuel talks about aspects of women's imprisonment that have received considerable publicity in recent years, for example several studies have been carried out by the Prison Reform Trust ([www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk](http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk)) – the inappropriate imprisonment of some women and the amount and degree of self harm found particularly among women prisoners. It is obvious that, despite his long experience working as a Probation officer and in several prisons before becoming a Governor this has been, as he describes it 'a massive culture shock.'

He says that previously he had occasionally thought that prison was an inappropriate place for an individual but that he now feels that far more often. I was able to attend two morning staff meetings with him and on both occasions the main topic of discussion was self-harm; he told me this was usual.

Samuel questions sentencing practice that sends women with severe mental health needs and/or learning disabilities to prison, but he acknowledges the lack of alternatives. It is difficult to find places in secure psychiatric care and facilities are reluctant to take people with complex, multiple problems. Thus Samuel describes the frustration of trying to move prisoners to more suitable accommodation.

In another interview Samuel talked about the effects that trying to care for women with such severe problems had both on staff and in terms of the issues it raises for management. Staff find the work traumatic and

exhausting. I have worked in situations where people self-harm and it is often difficult to make sense of this behaviour and one can come to dread what may happen during a shift on duty. In addition to this there is the need for constant vigilance and awareness of possible means of self-injury. Prisoners at risk of serious self-harm or suicide will be under constant observation. Obviously, a prison officer who is involved in this will not be available to assist in other areas of the prison. Thus the threat of self injury amongst prisoners has effects throughout the prison as it can lead to shortages of staff in other areas and increased stress to staff which in turn can result in higher levels of sickness absence. There may also be issues relating to other aspects of prison life such as security arising both from problems of deploying staff and from the competing demands of care and security which may be difficult for some staff to resolve.

Following incidents of severe self-harm or suicide staff at all levels who have been involved with the prisoners will require support. This can place considerable strain on senior managers who themselves have been upset and disturbed by events. Suicide in particular is viewed as a failing and high levels of suicide are seen as indicative of problems within the prison concerned, although arguably they may, as implied above, be reflective of inappropriate sentencing and a lack of suitable places for vulnerable offenders in need of specialist care.

## **Acting the Part**

EARLY START

VARIETY

CATCH UP

MEETINGS

EMAILS

VISIBILITY

SCHEDULE

THINKING

DISCUSSION

QUIET TIMES

MATTHEW – I get up at, sort of quarter past six in the morning, jump in the car to come to work at ten to seven. I'm into work for some time between half seven and quarter to eight, come into my office, make myself a cup of coffee, deal with any sort of tray stuff. If I've not been in the day before and I've got in-tray stuff I get rid of that.

MARK – Yeah. A typical day I am normally in round about between seven and half seven in the morning.

RACHEL – I get in about seven fifteen. From seven thirty to eight fifty five I'm in the prison, I check on the state of things, is everywhere clean, talk with the prisoners and staff, find out what's been happening, what's going on.

SAMUEL – Yeah, every day is different but in terms of trying to have a routine I start work at eight o' clock; I come in here and read the briefing notes from whoever was, we have night staff, someone who's in charge of the jail during the night and they will have emailed me a report which will simply tell me the events of the last twenty four hours, events during the night.

LUKE – I get in about seven thirty. First thing I do is check the emails and overnight reports.

MARK – I will walk through the gate where they will tell me how many we actually have in, pick up my keys. I normally go straight to reception.

MATTHEW – I give the Duty Governor or the orderly officer a ring to see if there's anything that's occurred during the night or that is occurring now that I need to know about.

SAMUEL – My first job is to familiarise myself with what's happened overnight and I do just remind myself what's happened in the last twenty four hours. And most mornings, not every morning, I then walk from here and go into the reception area.

MARK – Because we have staff who come in a bit earlier just to make sure our discharges to court, our remand population, and transfers, so I'll go into

reception and check with them just to make sure everything's okay. I will come into the office where I will check the briefing sheet.

MATTHEW – And probably up until nine o' clock I will sit down and go through emails that I've got, sort of paperwork stuff that I've got to do, see receptions out.

SAMUEL – I go from the reception wing to the induction wing, the wing the prisoners go to for the first week.

MARK – I update the briefing sheet. I meet with my Deputy Governor who, he holds a meeting with other members of the management team at eight fifteen, so I've already been briefed and I've fed in things to him that I would like to pass on.

SAMUEL – And by then it's half eight, twenty to nine, and depending on, then I go into, it's a very compact jail, you leave those two units and you make your way to the rest of the jail. In the rest of the jail all the wings go off one corridor. We've got eight other wings so there's various tours. So I will go to one or two of them, maybe, or just one of them, as I make my way to the boardroom. And at nine o' clock there is a morning meeting.

LUKE – Nine o' clock there is a business meeting with the Senior Management Team, the rest of the morning I spend in the prison, going around with the Principal Officers, find out what's going on. We've had problems with them feeling excluded so I've been working on that.

MATTHEW – Next thing which happens every morning is morning meeting which occurs nine o'clock every morning. Which is senior and middle management. Usual round the table, what's going on today, anything going on from yesterday? An operational report from the previous day. I try, that's quite a businesslike meeting in that it's quite short.

MARK – We do a daily briefing with regard to any incidents that might have occurred the night, or the day before.

RACHEL – We have morning meeting at nine. The rest of the morning, ten till twelve is usually taken up with meetings.

MATTHEW – It's a briefing. But it's not a briefing by me, it's everybody briefing each other.

SAMUEL – I meet all the operational heads every morning at nine o'clock, so I'll be making my way to that at nine o'clock, and at nine o'clock they all come in and I chair it. And the duty Governor from the night before, sorry, the duty Governor for the day before reads back the report, or talks about if the report's been sent, talks about the events from the last twenty four hours and what we're expecting to happen in the next twenty four hours.

MATTHEW – It's not a big discussion forum. Then I will open up my calendar, which my secretary keeps wonderfully up to date for me, and look at what I've got booked for the rest of the day. Which might be meetings like this, performance recognition awards to staff, seeing staff on return to work from sickness. The sort of scheduled meetings we have like race equality action team, security committee meetings, those kind of things. Quite a number of which I'll chair. And I sort of sit down, probably at that point, and plan my day.

MARK – I then check my diary, because we have an awful lot of meetings, you know, not always internal, external parties as well because we have a very large amount of partner agencies that we're involved in. So I'll check my diary, clear my paper work as much as possible, then hopefully go for a walk round the establishment. And I just go and visit different areas of the establishment, speak to staff, speak to prisoners, look at the condition of the establishment, make sure I'm happy with how things are looking.

MATTHEW – ... and sort of think, this is how I am going to make it work. Mid morning my day's in-tray will arrive, so I'll sit down and go through what's come in, and try to deal with as much as I can of that immediately. I have a feeling that if I let it build up, if I put it to one side, the stack'll build. So I try to deal with it there and then and at least get some sort of action for it, even if it's sending out a copy to someone and saying, "Can you look at this for me and report back?" If I haven't got any, if I've sorted emails the previous night, I'll usually go and have a walk round at that point. Go and

have a walk round the wings, go to reception – so that I can respond. I need to get at least the initial action sorted straight away. And depending on the make up that's what I'll be doing during the day. I'll either go out and have a walk round the prison, various people will come and knock at my door. Members of the SMT will come and discuss particular issues, individuals or just particular issues relating to their particular function that they just want to talk through, and through till lunchtime it will be mostly those kind of meetings. Lunch time, I don't do lunch. So I'll stay at my desk and probably ring my wife.

MARK – Yeah, I don't have a lunch break normally, I normally would grab a sandwich and it's normally a nice period, you know, to just sit and go through any other emails that I have. Then once a month I meet with members of my Senior Management Team where we go through the business side of it and they call it bilat meetings, it just for want of a better word than anything. And that's just the business side of it on a formal basis, and that actually leads to the Senior Management Team meeting where we discuss all of the reports that have been submitted.

RACHEL – From twelve till two I catch up on emails and I'll go to the gym or for a run.

MATTHEW – and all that kind of thing. Because it's a quiet time of day. Once I've got the roll correct at about quarter past twelve, so it's down time in effect through to half past one when we unlock. It's unlikely, because the majority of staff are away for their lunch; it's unlikely that anybody's going to call on my time. So I go through stuff that's on the intranet. I might use the phone, ring colleagues outside the prison to ask about various bits and pieces going on, appraise myself of the latest bits and pieces of Prison Service gossip about who's going to work where.

RACHEL – Two till four I'm in the prison.

LUKE – I catch up on bits and bobs, we try to schedule meetings for the afternoons.

MATTHEW – Then in the afternoon I'll be back into whatever meetings I've got, whatever in-tray stuff's arrived, responding to emails because

things that used to come through the post come by email so while I'm here they're actually kicking in and I'll deal with them as they come. And that goes through, and the next regular thing is at five o' clock I have an operational meeting which is myself, the orderly officer – P.O. [principal officer] – and the duty Governor and any other interested parties that want to come, but us three as a minimum. They'll then go and carry on their business, I stay in here, finish off whatever paperwork I've got, write up the Governor's journal, make sure that I've cleared my desk of the day's stuff. Look in the calendar, see what I'm doing the next day, see if there's anything I need to prep for. I usually leave the establishment between half five and six, cos it's pointless leaving any earlier than that because of the traffic.

RACHEL – Four till six I finish off for the day, make sure everything's dealt with.

MARK – So you get yourself into a routine and I, normally, so I'm in by about seven, half past seven, and I normally finish about five o' clock.

## **Synthesis**

It's an early start every day. I'm here by 7.30. I collect my keys at the gate and they'll tell me how many prisoners we have, we often get late arrivals, either from the courts or on transfer. Overcrowding in the system makes it harder to plan; reception staff often end up staying late. I go to reception and check everything is running smoothly to get prisoners in and out. Then catch up on what's happened overnight, deal with any e-mails or bits of business. I have a morning meeting at nine, members of the Senior Management Team including staff from the health centre, teaching and employment. We go over recent developments and try to plan the day, flag up anything that might cause problems, whether it is something practical or to do with a particular prisoner. We can't plan for everything, something out of the ordinary can always happen, even when everything seems really calm. You know you're in a volatile place. Much of the rest of the day will be meetings some of those take me out of the prison and I try to keep those to a minimum. E-mail and other mail comes in all the time, my PA fields phone calls for me. I try to deal with things as they come in as far as I can otherwise they just build up. Lunch time tends to get squeezed, it's usually a sandwich and coffee at my desk, if I can get out at all I will do to break up the day and refresh myself.

In the afternoon there are more meetings. I try to get into the prison every day. It's important to check the state of the building and to get a feel for the place. Talking to staff and prisoners is vital. You can't govern effectively from a distance and you can pick up useful bits of information that might not seem important, but can help in keeping on top of things and preventing problems. End of the day I'm back in the office catching up on final bits and bobs to try to leave things tidy. I usually leave at about six o'clock.

## **Commentary**

Listening to the Governors describing their days, and reading through this material again, one of the first things to strike me was the length of their working days – 10 to 11 hours, often without much, if anything of a break. This echoes the findings of the PGA survey (2002), which found that most Governor grades worked 50 to 55 hours per week. Going back and looking just at Governing Governors in the survey, I found that they worked hours ranging from 45 to 62 per week. This indicates long working days, added to which are on-call periods and problems in taking annual leave, which Governors in the survey reported. Governors are not paid overtime, but are expected to put in the hours needed to do the job. Long hours in demanding and often stressful work may have health implications which are not currently being addressed.

Matthew's remarks about needing to stay on top of work suggest that Governors are unlikely to have opportunities to catch up with work that accumulates to any extent. They report using lunch breaks to deal with e-mails and other correspondence. The Laming report on Prison Service management (2000) was critical of the amount of mail Governors received and this does not seem to have diminished. Indeed, increasing use of e-mail may well mean that more material arrives at Governor's desks, possibly without being vetted to make sure it is being sent to the most appropriate person.

Several of the group like to visit reception when they arrive at the prison in the morning. Prison arrivals and departures are a key part of the day. Arriving prisoners may be particularly vulnerable, having just been sentenced or transferred, departing ones may have court appearances scheduled, outside appointments or transfers to other prisons, or the challenges of release to face. All of these need sensitive and appropriate handling by staff, a difficult task made harder by the pressure of increasing numbers of prisoners passing through the system. It is important that Governors are seen around the prison and provide visible and accessible leadership and support for staff. Visibility around the prison is considered by all the Governors in the group as an important part of their role.

Samuel aims to visit at least part of the prison on a daily basis, I was able to accompany him on one of these visits during which I saw the library, education and work areas and the induction area where prisoners stay for their first week in the prison as well as accommodation on one of the wings and areas for observation and segregation. I was able to chat with prisoners and staff. Rachel also makes an early visit to the prison to catch up on 'what's going on' and to check on the physical state of the prison. Even through my few short visits, I noticed that atmospheres varied within prisons. Sometimes I would go to a prison and get a feeling of tension at the gate, at other times things would feel more relaxed, and this feeling would be confirmed by the Governors if I mentioned it to them. Walking around the prison allows Governors to pick up on the atmosphere and to be aware of possible problems. Prisoners themselves will often alert Governors to potential problems as they walk around.

Having caught up with events overnight by reading briefing sheets and checking e-mails and messages some Governors will have a morning meeting. Samuel, Matthew, Rachel and Luke all attend these. Mark briefs his Deputy, who chairs the morning meeting. Not all prisons have this meeting. Samuel commented that it had not happened on a daily basis at his previous prison and that while it seemed strange at first he now valued it. As discussed in the introductory material communication is a vital part of both management and leadership. Meetings provide a formal opportunity for this where each Governor can exchange information with his or her staff within the prison. Walking around the prison allows the Governor to pick up information and to exchange conversation in a less formal manner.

External meetings also allow for information exchange and developing an understanding of the context in which partner organisations work, as Matthew points out. Governors work to a basic daily routine although all stressed to me that their days varied and they never knew what might come up. I had asked Governors to describe a 'typical' day. However several spoke about particular incidents, often traumatic, such as incidents of self harm, which are particularly common in women's prisons, deaths, incidents of violence or damage and staff shortages which required changes to the

planned deployment of staff. These are exacerbated by population pressures which mean that prisoners arrive late at the prison so that extra staff are needed to cover reception for longer hours than is usual, or staff have to be willing to stay late to settle new prisoners in.

Major incidents such as violent disturbances are, fortunately, rare but Governors need to be constantly aware of the possibility. The enquiry into the escape from Whitemoor prison (Woodcock, 1994) for example, shows how this is possible, largely because of a gradual slippage in security awareness.

Matthew and Mark both mentioned checking their diaries and Matthew expresses appreciation of the work his secretary does in maintaining his diary and helping with organising his time. All of my meetings were arranged through secretaries who act as gatekeepers. Secretarial staff, in keeping some control over Governors' scheduling are literally gatekeepers in that in all the prisons I visited, the Governor is reached through her or his secretary's office. All of the Governors I spoke with wanted staff and prisoners to feel they are accessible, not remote. But they also needed to be able to withdraw to have uninterrupted time to work and think, in particular on items such as planning for future developments or simply to have a chance to reflect away from dealing with a seemingly constant stream of incoming information, requests, and expectations. This need to ensure they have thinking and planning time is likely to be familiar to many who occupy leadership roles, it gives Governors the chance to enact the creative aspect of their role.

From this brief summary it is apparent that at least three of Brun and Cooper's seven 'missing pieces' may reflect problem areas in ensuring the well-being of Governing Governors. Like many executives, and several of the Governors did compare themselves to Chief Executives in businesses and saw themselves as, at least in part, running businesses, the Governors have a heavy and unrelenting workload. Problems that may be associated with this, such as fatigue and stress, may be complicated by elements of role ambiguity and role conflict as Governors juggle the different aspects of their role and try to provide safe, secure and humane care while meeting the

demands of their business plans and fitting with the wider expectations of the many stakeholders with whom they are associated.

Closely linked to workload is work-life balance which is likely to be affected by long working hours leaving little time for relaxation, family and social networks. This could be a particular difficulty for Governors like John who is working in a prison some distance from his home and is away from his family all week with a long commute at weekends to go home. Governors may find that their support networks outside the Prison Service are affected by difficulties they have in maintaining relationships because of long and demanding working hours. Working long hours may also affect the quality of a Governor's performance at work due to fatigue that may not be apparent until it manifests as a serious problem.

## Matthew's soliloquy

Part of our difficulty is we are already well into the financial year before we get our budgets and our budget changes as money comes into it and is taken out of it, so it's not like being in a situation where somebody says right show me how much it's going to take to do this [here], and I say 'this is going to cost you £14 million', and they say right there's £14,000,000, mate, make it work, go out and achieve those outcomes.' What actually happens is I'm working and doing all the things I can and expecting £14 million and I actually get to £13.4 million, and I have to try and cut my spending, and I may be well into the year by the time that comes, I'm talking five months in and I've already spent proportionately. So I'm having to claw back at the end of the year, and then I might get top sliced, something's happened so more money comes out.

Or I might get more money, that drops in. You know, we got money to offset the increase in utilities. So there's another hundred thousand pounds. Well, that's great, but if you'd told me I was getting that at the beginning of the year I would have been able to plan with that. And there's a real perverse incentive at play in it, because if my budget finally is set at £14 million, and I bring the establishment in at 13½ million pounds. I get vilified for under spending, because that is money that I said I needed that I didn't need. So why did I say I needed it? And I don't get any benefit the next year, what they do is work out my budget on the basis that I needed 13½ million the previous year. I can't say for instance that I'm going to save money in order that I can have two extra officers next year to do this piece of work.

The incentive is to come in on budget, absolutely on budget. And if that means in the last few months of the year that I go and spend money, that means that. And if it means that in the last few months of the year I stop doing things that are good things that I should be doing, it means that. On a budget of about £14 million, I came in about £3000 under budget last year. Which is good, that is as near to the line as I'm going to get. And that took loads of management and all sorts of wheeling and dealing and being very careful. But it wasn't a sensible way to plan business at the beginning of the

year. I couldn't say 'this is what I intend to do' because it's voted monies. It's you know, that's the government accounting structure, and it's ridiculous. Especially when we are in competition with the private sector, it doesn't allow us to do the same things that they do, they get a contract and that is how much money they get and if they manage to save they still get that much money and they can use it to do something else with, do whatever else they can with it.

### **Commentary**

Matthew talked at some length about the budgeting system, explaining it to me and showing me different versions of his budget that had come in over the months. When we had this conversation, in August 2008, he was on version 6 of his budget. He also had a large file of instructions relating to the prison budget.

It struck me at the time that for a Service that is aiming to become more business-like in its approach to management it was ironic that the system of budgeting seems to force Governors into a short term approach to financial management. It seems improbable that businesses in the private sector would work to a less than one year system – indeed Matthew points out that things are different for private sector prisons - they have a much clearer idea of their budget and can make planned savings against increased expenditure in following years. Public Sector prisons cannot benefit from savings they make.

Matthew also commented that prisons in an area do not share budgetary information and that if they did they might be able to help one another out, as departments within a prison can. For example a prison with an under spend could offer surplus funds to one that was facing an overspend. This would seem to be a relatively simple matter of communication. Sharing such information at area meetings would at least allow Governors to advise and support one another with regard to budget management. Prisons generally have specialist financial managers to oversee budgetary arrangements and Matthew later describes his as almost a magician in what he manages to achieve in terms of bringing the prison in on budget in such difficult circumstances.

One particular area where this system of budgeting may have a negative effect is in planned repairs and improvements. Matthew described a situation in his own prison where he was unable to save money and carry it forward to use for planned repairs to the fabric of the prison, beyond those allowed for by the existing budget, with the result that when things did go wrong (a heating failure) the disruption and expense was greater than it need have been. Other Governors related similar experiences commenting that they felt they had to fight for money which if they had a more rational budgeting system they might have been able to find from within. Not all Governors were frustrated by the system, though. Rachel commented, "That is just the way it is."

## **The Director's Cut**

LATITUDE

QUESTIONING

CONFLICT

ADAPTATION

FRUSTRATION

POLITICS

CULTURE

ACCOUNTABILITY

PROCESS

TRUST

MATTHEW – Quite often I'm not smiling. I mean a lot of the things that we implement are not things that without policy changes from Headquarters or politically we would ever have gone and done because we're a, we're a big organisation. There are things that we might have, while we might have wanted to achieve the same outcome we wouldn't have gone through that process to get there. But because we're a big organisation quite a lot of the time we don't get a choice about process, process is imposed. So, you know, we won't necessarily go out smiling about that but we will go and say, "This is the process, the process is non-negotiable. The outcomes are worthwhile, we've always said the outcomes are worthwhile, and this process will work to achieve, to deliver them, We've gotta make it work the best it can." sort of thing. You're not always, it can be frustrating on occasion. I mean the higher level political stuff I find frustrating. Change of Home Secretary, change of prisons minister and their particular way of dealing with an issue can massively impact on your day to day operations for no other reason than that individual's view of how government policy's interpreted and applied.

So, you know, if you get a very hard line Home Secretary, who wants to be involved in the detail of operations that means that operational decisions that you would previously have made, you now make, document and make politician press-proof because they're likely to be interrogated. So it kind of curtails your freedom and your creativity a bit, or makes the process longer because you're having to, you're having to provide something that shows exactly why you've come to that conclusion.

Yes, but we shouldn't be in a position where we're saying 'well actually we've got this policy that says we do this, but we're not doing it like that, we're doing it like this,' because fortunately in an establishment we can actually change our policy providing it actually sits within the sort of national and legal framework we can say, "Well actually we're not doing it like that anymore, we are going to do it like this, which is the way we've always, the exception we've always made we're going to write in."

MARK – You receive some direction and guidance from Prison Service, also from the National Offender Management Service, you know and bits

like that in regard to how we want to move forward. But there's also the personal bit about wanting to move forward and bits like that. So it's, it's, and you're given a fair degree of latitude as a Governor as to how you decide to take that forward, and it's not overly prescriptive. There is a 'and this is where we would like to be' but necessarily the path you take isn't fixed. It's not as prescriptive as people think. Some things are, but they're very much in the minority, you know, where it is clearly to do with a national issue that has arisen for whatever reason. But generally the direction of the establishment is, you know, the destination, but how you get there is left an awful lot to the Governor and the management team.

So there are sometimes individual issues like, you know, like that. There's some things, you know, I see coming out from the Prison Service, I think, "Why are we doing that?" But I have the opportunity, obviously, you know, to raise my views and opinions and to question. So it's not as if, there is very, very little, you know, dictatorial, edicts come down, which is good. So that, in regards to conflict, we are allowed, and I'm on about direction, you know, and does that conflict with how I'm trying to take the establishment forward? There aren't many things that I can immediately think of that create that conflict because what I am allowed to do to a large extent is to adapt them to the needs of the establishment. Hence my comment earlier that, you know, they're not overly prescriptive. We used to be, and I'm going back years and years when it was 'you will'. What we're allowed to do now is to actually adapt it into our own systems in the establishment to suit what we deliver because the regime I deliver here will be totally different you know from [another prison].

## **Synthesis**

Well, I think it varies as to how much control you get. Perhaps you have to prove yourself – that’s not unreasonable. And of course line managers vary, some are more hands on than others. I’ve never really felt I’m being micro-managed but sometimes I do feel a bit, “for heaven’s sake, you thought I could do the job, why don’t you let me get on with it?” It can get frustrating. And, I think this is getting better now, but there have been times when it’s seemed to me that what you can do is down to who you are ‘in’ with, who likes you or, perhaps more important, who doesn’t.

I think everyone wants to cover their backs. If something went wrong here, I mean really wrong, then it could affect a lot of people. I’d be the first to go.

Sometimes things come down and they make sense but the way I’m asked to do them doesn’t and I’ll try to jiggle that a bit, or sometimes I’m expected to do things and I think they’re inappropriate or a waste of time and then I’ll try to argue. I’ve had some say in appointing people to the Senior Management Team, I think that’s important. You have to try to build up a team that will work well together, with a good mix of skills and attitudes.

Sometimes you’re really aware of all the political stuff. It’s always there in the background but every now and then it kind of leaps up and down at you because something has happened and the politicians want to be seen to be doing something. And you think, “I’ve been trying to do something and this really isn’t helping.”

## **Commentary**

Matthew expresses his frustration with various aspects of working for the Prison Service. Unlike Mark he does not emphasise the autonomy available to Governors in the interpretation of instructions from the Prison Service. Whereas Mark suggested that the end result was laid down but Governors had some leeway in choosing how to get to it Matthew creates a picture in which both the end result and the process involved are largely set down and he, as Governing Governor, has effectively to 'sell' something he may not believe in to his staff. It may be that this is in part a reflection on either relative experience or type of establishment, or some other factor which affects how much autonomy a Governor may be given. This raises an unasked question as to what factors might affect the degree of autonomy a Governing Governor is given in the interpretation and implementation of policy.

Like John in his soliloquy, Matthew refers to the effects of political change and the attitudes of individual politicians. Rachel also referred to this as a source of frustration in her first, unrecorded interview while Samuel made reference, as do Bryans and Wilson (2000) to Governors having a role in protecting the reputations, and jobs, of politicians whose position may be vulnerable in the case of a crisis such as the escape of a high-profile, high security prisoner. Governors are expected to provide strategic leadership and a vision for their prison, while also enacting the policies and vision of the Prison Service and of members of the government with responsibility for the Criminal Justice System. As the Governors' conversations show, there can be an element of self-preservation in the attitudes of members of a government which requires public support in order to remain in office. Individual members of government also require support to retain their positions. This need to maintain support has been described by Kernell, whose idea is discussed by Sanders (2008), as 'permanent campaigning' and has taken on increased importance for career politicians over recent decades. As part of this political office holders want, and need, to be seen to be responding to issues of public concern, including those of criminal justice. Sometimes this need for quick reaction to events or circumstances

can lead to decisions and actions that appear contradictory or to the short-termism that Governors sometimes find so frustrating.

## **Part two**

JOSHUA – It's not absolute; it's not black and white. People are always looking for 'What's the answer, what's the instruction, what's the order on this?' And of course there are thousands of them, it's the application of standards and rules that's the difference. And a lot of people don't understand that. There's almost this culture that somebody's done these rules and we're here to follow them. And we're here to work with them. We're here to implement them. We still are required to use judgement. Seeing it as a toolkit, as an aid to management is difficult; we are definitely going through a phase of over reliance on audit compliance. We are reaching a stage where there is a belief that audit compliance is almost the answer. That if you refine your audit tools enough you can bring in this standardisation and raise standards. But it does miss this point, as you say, that this is a toolkit, an aid to judgement, a managerial tool. It's not a substitute for experience, knowledge and application and how you choose to apply those things. And actually I think this is a key debate for how you manage prisons at the moment and how you exercise central control locally. Cos there's definitely a view that Prison Governors should be managed now. Even the Director General has been known to say, "I don't want any more maverick Governors now," which is fine, nobody wants maverick Governors to go off and do things. But it is quite closely controlled. It's not a bad thing as long as you accept that you're never going to be able to control all aspects. You've got to put people in positions with some trust and say, "I've got confidence in that person to do the right thing." And life's a lot easier when you do that. And I don't always feel that, with some of the checking, you look at some things and you think, "I think they could have trusted me to do that." Or I think I have a better idea of what's required and how to do that than they do.

It's quite a political argument really. It seems undeniable really that the last ten years, the last change in government, has really introduced a culture that is performance driven, target emphasised. And how the public sector responds, in a political way, to that is to say, "Yes, we have all the systems

that emphasise a performance driven, accountable structure.” And I fully accept the public accountability argument except I think where I differ is how we measure that. You know, you don’t need 62 standards to run a prison. You need half a dozen core, important things that we all believe in.

### **Further Commentary**

Joshua spoke at length about autonomy and accountability and his words fit well as a further reflection on the observations made by Mark and Matthew. For this reason I have chosen to consider them in addition to those two extracts.

Joshua refers here to the number of directives of one sort or another that appertain within the Prison Service. On a BBC World at One radio interview (BBC Radio 4, June 29th, 2009) Sir Michael Bichard criticised the number and process-oriented focus of public sector directives. As I suggested earlier, it does seem that too many targets can prove counter-productive as people spend time making sure that they are seen to be meeting them. Some of the Governors I met with did suggest that information relating to targets might be ‘massaged’ or that performance measured by targets might not be an accurate reflection of the service given by an individual establishment.

This point was also made when I met with Sue Brookes at Prison Service headquarters, who commented that the reporting of prison performance may not reflect actual performance. Some of the Governors I spoke with felt that their prisons were doing good work that was not always reflected by the various measurement tools. John suggested that a move away from standards is taking place, framing this as a cyclic process in that the Prison Service goes through periods of strong emphasis on measurable standards and audit procedures and then gradually moves away from this towards a less procedurally controlled, target oriented ethos before pulling back again.

Joshua raises the issue of trust, of expressing confidence in the ability and judgement of Governors. This echoes the ‘missing pieces’ framework in that if a Governor is not accorded trust s/he is unlikely to feel respected, nor to feel they are receiving recognition for what they do or, more subtly, for what they could do, or that they are participating as fully as they might in

decision making. It also links to ideas of role underload in that expectations that are too low can be as frustrating, and potentially damaging, as those that are too high. This can also be seen as a manifestation of role ambiguity which Brun and Cooper highlight as having a potentially detrimental effect on well-being in that Governor's roles as leaders with vision are pitted against ideas of standardisation, central control and monitoring.

Joshua is not against such control and monitoring per se but he believes that there needs to be scope for flexibility and judgement and, in particular, that there are too many standards. He suggests that these should be pared down to 'half a dozen, core, important things that we all believe in.'

This raises the unasked question of what those half dozen things might be. I tried to think of this and came up with a possible six which seemed to fit with the impressions I have gained from my interviews and conversations with the Governors.

1. Decency
2. Compassion
3. Security
4. Responsibility and accountability
5. Developing potential of staff and prisoners.
6. Working with and within the wider community.

These are also reminiscent of the purpose of imprisonment as set out in Prison Rule 1 and discussed earlier. The many targets and standards that Prisons have to meet are aimed at meeting these core values which already exist within the Prison Service. It may, however, be that breaking them up into smaller measurable targets has the effect of obscuring them, or at least deflecting attention from them, so that there is an over concentration on process and detail at the expense of the greater, but less definable, aims and values of the Service. This is discussed further in the next section which looks at Joshua's comments on targets within the Prison Service.

## Joshua's Soliloquy

And of course there are huge pressures to deliver all the time, you know. We talked about SAU, but you know there's a whole agenda of KPTs, targets each year, business planning targets, NOMs targets, area office targets sent down to do that, plus the things we set for ourselves, plus the things that we think are really relevant for doing the work that we do. So, you know, there is plenty of work that we set ourselves and it's a reasonably [sighs] well it's a demanding, you know, demanding targets are set and there are a lot of demands placed on establishments to deliver, you know, across a whole range of agendas and it's possible, because the thinking is not really that defined, you know, there's not a narrow focus, you know, this year we want prisons to really deliver on this. We deliver on everything. We deliver everything, you know.

I mean, I think there are 62, 62 key targets. You have to say 'why would there be 62? Why aren't there ten this year and ten next year?' And have a real focus on them. But no, there are 62. Plus the whole agendas that go with those. Equality, race, things like that. And expectations that we will play very full roles in government policy. Really, really valid, you know, really useful things to do that are layer on layer of responsibility to contribute to and to be prioritised with what's happening. I'd like to think that there was [personal autonomy] and I think you prioritise the effort you put into them. I would think the Prison Service still operates the, you know, these are the targets, you've gotta do them all. How well you do them all, what level of achievement you achieve in them all, but there is a minimum level that's acceptable. And so you know, your job, should you decide to accept it – a bit like Mission Impossible – is to have a go at it all and be successful. There is some discretion of course and you're always arguing your case about what you can do, arguing for the resources that go with it. Perfectly normal processes. You know, I can do this, if we prioritise this, and if I have the resources for this; and I can't do this quite as well. But then, you know, there'll be a new initiative that will come, possibly a politically driven one influenced by something that's happened.

I went to the Governors' forum this year, I go every year and Michael Spurr got up and said there are 22 change initiatives in the service at the moment. Goodness me, I wish you hadn't told us there were 22 because we were just doing our best before. But when you think about it there are 22 change initiatives for the way we work, fundamental things like finance, procurement, all those things, which are only two out of the 22 of course but the Board, on our behalf, directed by ministers, have agreed a huge change programme. So we implement those, but we implement those by doing the day job as well. They're in addition to the day job. It's a fairly full day job, looking after people, doing things for people.

### **Commentary**

Joshua's soliloquy emphasises both the quantity and the diversity of the demands placed on prisons and their Governors. He describes a range of demands each of which is expected to be met, and shown to be met. Staff not only have to meet these goals, they also have to complete the necessary reports to show that they have, or have not, been met.

Joshua describes layers of target setting. Each prison has its own targets. Area Management add to this, more come from the NOMS and from Prison Service headquarters. I found myself thinking that, even allowing for delegation, it would be hard to keep track of all these different targets and make sure they are being met. This information then has to be channelled to the Governor who has overall responsibility and on to higher levels of management. However despite the vast amount of data that must go back to the area offices and headquarters associated with these targets and initiatives there is still far more information generated than is ever reported upon. The Prison Service concentrates, understandably, on quantifiable measurable targets. How many, how much, how often, how long? These ignore many of the 'softer', aspects of the job, such as those associated with developing relationships between staff and prisoners which are vital to a system which relies on relationships to maintain security and order, so-called dynamic security.

Joshua, and other Governors, talked about the constant pressure to deliver, both on existing targets and in making changes and improvements. Joshua

points to a lack of focus – that it is hard to do so many things well. As the Governor of a comparatively small prison he has fewer people in his Senior Management Team to divide and delegate work amongst and he commented to me that he takes direct responsibility for aspects of the job the Governors of larger prisons would not do. Thus although it can be argued that the small size of his prison means that the Governing Governor role carries less responsibility it may actually be that the complexity of that role is greater because less can be delegated.

Governors take a major role in the implementation of policy. Both Matthew and Joshua put an emphasis on control of process, although Mark suggests there is some flexibility in this, and Joshua also suggests individual Governors can exercise some autonomy in how they prioritise the targets they are set. Some targets will be more important, or more appropriate to, some settings.

Despite the pressure of his job and the fact that he was recovering from (non-work related) injury Joshua brings some humour to his analysis. Rachel commented to me that she felt it was essential to have a sense of humour.

At the end of his soliloquy Joshua brings everything back to ‘the day job’ making the point that there is always the complex job of working with prisoners. Some Governing Governors are closer to prisoners than others. Joshua told me on another occasion that he felt that building a sense of community was an important part of his role, a sentiment shared by Ruth. As Governor of a small prison Joshua is both able, and obliged, to be closer to prisoners than may be feasible for Governors of larger prisons. All of the Governors I spoke with stressed the importance of being a visible presence in the prison for both prisoners and staff.

## **Changing the Scenery**

COMMISSIONING

CHOICE

DIFFERENCE

NEEDS

ATTENTION

COSMETIC

POLITICS

COST

MANAGEMENT

REGIONAL

SAMUEL – In terms of our day to day business it will have no impact. There is a feeling around that it was cosmetic and also that John Reid was in a very difficult situation with regard to the population and so forth. Having said that, I was surprised when he said he was resigning. So in terms of our day to day operation it's not going to make much difference. If it means that we'll get more sympathetic attention at the centre about our issues and there is an attempt to make sure that this end to end offender management really works, then it'll be really good. I'm just not sure of the reasons behind this particular timing because there wasn't a great deal of discussion about this at all.

So in the past when people have had all sorts of philosophical debates about this being a good thing to do, that would have been a good time to bring it in. It appears to have come in on the back of some sort of crisis management. I might be cynical, but that's a view that a lot of my colleagues share. But there's a hope that we might get a bit more attention.

It's a bit like NOMS. I mean all that's up in the air. One minute we're working, we're told we're part of NOMS, then we don't seem to be part of NOMS. We are working with NOMS, we are not part of NOMS.

You can't sort of argue, well you could, I wouldn't argue the concept. It's the sort of thing we've talked about for years - a focus on offender management and Probation and prisons working together better than they have ever worked before. I welcome all that, but this isn't delivering. NOMS isn't delivering. It's an expensive resource as well. People are finding out. So in this time of cuts, how much is it taking to run this?

Maybe when the Regional Offender Manager starts commissioning we'll be able to sit up and say, "Oh, that's the difference you make." But they haven't yet, they haven't got the funding to commission anything. They are supposed to start commissioning. So one day if the Regional Offender Manager comes to me and says, "I'm not going to do business with you; you're too expensive." Well of course that's not going to happen because there's nowhere else.

I have to be very careful politically because no-one wants to be seen to be criticising it. And that's the other thing, speak to Governors off the record and you get a very different story from what you'll get officially. Officially you'll get, "Good thing, offender management, working together." Because we have to toe the line.

The Regional Offender Manager's office sends people in here to look at what we're doing. And they take loads of information from us, like what's going on in terms of offender management, what's going on in terms of our programmes and so on and so forth.

And they just gather up loads of information which we are already providing in lots of other ways. We provide all this information and occasionally suggestions come back. "Well, had you not thought about this and that?" Well, yes, thank you, we do on regular basis. And then nothing else happens.

They just sort of drop in. I get a visit from people from the Regional Offender Manager's office every two or three months. And they spend a day or so in the prison and they come and see me at the end and say, "very good." And that's it. And of course most of them are people that I know because they're seconded from Prison and Probation services.

I just keep them at a distance. They waste my time.

MATTHEW – Probably, it's put us closer to our ministers. We are a bigger part of the Ministry of Justice than we ever were of the Home Office.

Yes, and certainly since the Ministry of Justice came into being. I've had a visit at ministerial level; they are paying us a lot more attention. I had Charlie Falconer, when he was Secretary of State came on an evening, on a Friday evening, and I knew he was local, and I knew that was why he was coming. But to have him come, and he listened, and he knew what the problems were, and it was really quite good. And then David Hanson, who is one of our other ministers, came in July, and he came in to do a media bit and have a look round the prison and he was a pleasure to deal with. And again quite insightful about the pressures we are facing and quite realistic about what the government can actually do about that. And rather than

fobbing off and everything else bluff and bluster, he was quite clear about yes that would be really nice to do but we can't afford it.

I like that. I'd prefer that direct approach.

So yes, things have changed, and you know NOMS, I don't know quite what is happening with it. I don't know quite where the idea that NOMS is going to die came from, possibly from the Probation Service.

The Probation Service union is far more media savvy than the organisation we've got on our side. That's the only reason I'd say it probably came from Probation. They are probably better able to get that sort of message out. I don't know if it's going to happen. I think it would be politically very difficult to step back from something that has been shown to cost x-amount of million pounds.

It is a good thing, commissioning is a good thing. But we never created the headroom that we needed to allow them to take money out of places and put it in other places, I mean, they just can't go to places like here where I am at 99.5% capacity all the time and say we're going to take some money off you, because I'm going to say, well okay, then take some prisoners off me, and they can't. They are not in a position to do it. So I don't think it is, I think it is probably, it was probably flawed as a concept from the beginning.

In terms of how the original idea was going to be translated into reality, because we didn't have, we weren't setting up something new; we weren't moving away from what we'd got, setting up something new and moving people from the old thing to the new thing we were changing. What we had already got, and there was never, there was never any guarantee that we have the capacity to do that and an awful lot of money went into trying to do it. You know, setting up Regional Offender Manager's offices, doing all that kind of stuff, without, I mean, we employed Regional Offender Managers on the basis that they were going to manage, they were going to directly manage offender managers, Probation officers. And they never did, the people who applied to those jobs didn't get the jobs they applied for, they got a commissioning job, which is not what they applied for and not

only is it not what they applied for, it's probably not what they were selected for. We didn't select people who were commissioners.

They are Criminal Justice managers, and you've now got at the centre of NOMS Julia Taylor; Julia has got a commissioning background from health and is a commissioner and has come to do commissioning. It makes far more sense that way, whereas the people who should be doing commissioning in the region are having to learn how commissioning works and how to do it while their instinct is to manage the same way we do. Because they are us, you know.

I think the original concept changed very, very quickly very early on in the process, because legislation wasn't in place to make it happen. It required primary legislation around the offender management bill that has just gone through. Around Probation Boards, and that kind of thing because that is enshrined in legislation and the legislation needed to change for the model to work and my simplistic view of what happened is they didn't get the legislation in place, they introduced the model, which meant you couldn't have the model as it was designed to be, which meant you couldn't do offender management. You couldn't do offender managers; you had to do regional commissioners. So it was pushed down that commissioning route by the lack of legislation.

They didn't get people who were commissioners by trade in those roles, and we didn't enable them because we didn't have, we were asking them to commission everything within that region. But a lot of the things we were asking them to commission aren't regional services. Don't have a regional base. What we are beginning to end up with, I think is we're going to end up with regional commissioning, but that stuff will be stuff that is appropriately commissioned on a regional basis, on a smaller scale.

And I think for instance alcohol services to prisoners, it would make perfect sense, rather than me commissioning someone to do alcohol services in my prison for the Regional Offender Manager to say, we'll withdraw the money that you spend on alcohol services, put it back into our pot at the centre, and we will commission alcohol services across all the prisons and

Probation services and join everything out and provide a thoroughly linked in service. That would make better sense, rather than their managing the whole of my budget, a lot of which is not dependent on them, because my prisoners come from all over the place.

## **Synthesis**

I don't know how much difference the re-launch of NOMS will make. To be honest it's never affected us much here. NOMS people come to visit, we answer their questions, give them information, they go away and that's pretty much it. It's hard to see how much they can commission services really. Finding places for prisoners is so much about where we can fit people in. There's no space in the system to use that as a way of improving financial efficiency which often seems to me to be the main criterion. Even if you look at quality of service, prison places are at such a premium that even the establishments that aren't up to the mark are full because prisoners have to go somewhere.

There might be some scope for commissioning particular services at regional level, but different prisons have different needs so there might be limits as to how effective that can be and the Directors of Offender Management have different backgrounds so their levels of understanding are going to vary.

With the Ministry of Justice I hope it might mean we get a more consistent level of attention and interest. Sometimes I feel that the attention prisons get is opportunistic and reactive. If something happens that the media pick up on and there's public reaction then we'll get some attention. That's often negative. It would be nice if they'd pick up more on some of the good work we do. I tend to think the London prisons and the more high profile places will notice a difference more than places out in the sticks like us.

## **Commentary**

Samuel expresses a world-weary cynicism in talking about these two topics - the setting up of the Ministry of Justice and the future of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS). He suggests that setting up the Ministry of Justice was a cosmetic exercise driven by crisis management rather than being properly thought out and discussed. He sees that it could have advantages for prisons in that it might bring them closer to the responsible ministers rather than having to compete for attention with other concerns. For Matthew the setting up of the Ministry has been a cause for rather more optimism as, unlike Samuel, he has received ministerial visits. However, as he remarks, this may in part have been due to the geographical location of his prison which is much nearer to London than Samuel's. Other Governors who commented on the setting up of the Ministry of Justice, such as Ruth, seemed to have few expectations that it would make a great difference to them. Similarly Rachel, in her third, unrecorded interview, felt that the establishment of the Ministry would make no real difference.

Moving on to NOMS, which, as discussed in the section on New Labour and imprisonment, was effectively re-launched shortly before I completed the interviews for this project, this also seems to be surrounded by uncertainty. In this case though, uncertainty seems to have always been a feature of Governor's attitudes, proposed changes have merely changed the character of this.

Samuel characterises NOMS as a waste of time, a good idea poorly thought through that failed in the execution. He questioned its value at a time when money was tight – and signs were that it would get tighter. Rachel expressed similar views commenting that she had no idea what NOMS did, and that the only contact with them that she had was at occasional meetings. However, in our final meeting, which took place after the re-organisation (or rebirth) of NOMS had begun to be implemented Rachel was more positive as she was spending a lot more time with her Director of Offender Management and saw this as a possible route for career development. John also commented on this and the fact that some Governors were spending more time away from their prisons because they were supporting the newly appointed Directors of Offender Management. As DOMs come from

different backgrounds they will have different levels of knowledge and expertise in the differing areas of the role. This point was also made by Joshua who wondered both how well NOMS staff from other backgrounds would understand prisons and also how well Prisons and Probation would work together as he felt there was a considerable cultural gap between the two. Ruth made a similar point when she commented that in the Prison Service there tends to be an emphasis on rapid action whereas Probation tends to be more deliberative. Joshua also wondered whether it had actually been a wise move to keep the name NOMS as it could serve as an impediment to attempts to change and improve the system. He suggests that NOMS was strongly associated with former Director General Martin Narey and that its initial impetus was lost when he left the Prison Service. Luke, in his unrecorded fourth interview, expressed the view that linking Prisons and Probation meant that prisons had lost a champion – that there is now no-one at a very senior level who can speak up solely for the Prison Service.

Matthew seems to share the view that NOMS was a good idea that was not thought through. He suggests that it could not develop as originally envisaged because the necessary legislation to allow this was not in place. Thus rather than being a commissioning body that would encourage competition and encourage higher standards as was initially suggested it became a somewhat redundant extra chunk of bureaucracy staffed by people with little understanding or experience of commissioning working in services where there was little opportunity to exercise choice in commissioning of services due to the lack of overall choice in sourcing prison places and the pressure of population which removes the headroom needed to allow such choices to be made. Matthew can, however, see a possible commissioning role within certain specific areas such as regional provision of drug and alcohol services which could lead to greater efficiency and free prison managers to concentrate more on the aspects of their jobs which cannot be undertaken by others. However, a blanket approach to service provision, even at a comparatively local level, does run the risk of leading to a ‘one size fits all’ approach and some prisoners being left with services that are not best suited to their needs. Governing Governors might also object to a perceived loss of autonomy especially if

they felt they were not fully consulted about proposals for services affecting their prison. Within Brun and Cooper's model this could reflect a lack of recognition; a lack of respect; and a failure to ensure participation in decision making all of which need to be guarded against in order to maintain Governor well-being.

## **Losing the Plot**

EXPECTATIONS

PERKS

INTERESTING

DECISION

RISK

DIFFICULT

DISAPPOINTMENT

COMMUNICATION

COMPLIANCE

NICE DAY

MATTHEW – Yes, as was everywhere. I had one principal officer, four senior officers and five officers. We couldn't do anything very much; we went round, served meals, dealt with prisoners' medications and treatments. We couldn't really do anything else.

Yes, and that was it. But we gave the prisoners very clear expectations that that was what we were going to do. And we tried to give them little bits of perks, in terms of the food we were able to deliver to their cells was better than they would normally get. And I went round with my mobile phone and if there was anybody who was, we didn't let prisoners out to use the telephone at all, but if there was anybody who had a particular, you know, it's my wife's birthday kind of thing, I rang them up. And said, you know, it's your birthday, but so-and-so can't ring you up, because this is happening. And he'll ring you tomorrow and we're very sorry, but...

Yes, we did that kind of thing just to keep it, and it was fine. The only prisoners who misbehaved were a couple who were going to court that day, who were going to court to be sentenced and were expecting to walk out on sentence based on the amount of time they had spent on remand. So they were expecting to get out of prison, and they didn't. Other than that there were no problems. And it was an interesting day really. I quite enjoyed it to be honest.

No, wouldn't want to do it again, but it was fun to do. Once you decided you weren't going to do anything, once you decided you weren't going to struggle and try to put on a regime. And I took the decision I wasn't going to stretch us and try and put some kind of regime on, because if we did that and something went wrong with those expectations. So we went with nothing, and just tried to do, little bits of extras on top where we could. Which worked really well. I know other people, in other prisons in the area, where they managed to get visits on, and all that kind of thing, which my view was, if you ended up having a problem there was nobody to respond to it. So I took the better safe than sorry option and decided not to. And I'm quite glad I did that even with the benefit of hindsight.

JOSHUA – That was a very difficult day for us, different in some of the ways it would affect us because of the nature of the regime, an open one, with everyone unlocked. What I sort of reflected on in the last week which was very difficult to begin with, it surprised me the number of people who took part. My initial own assessment was that I would have a core staff who wouldn't take industrial action and when it came to it they all did.

They all went, I had one officer here in the morning and another one in the afternoon only and some OSGs [Officer Support Grades] and it was difficult first thing and I put this to the staff that they abandoned the prison to take part in the action, wrongly in my view. It was only a difference of half an hour until I and other Governor grades arrived and it would have been perfectly safe to do so. Not that it is an unsafe thing but when I arrived there was a certain amount of tension and about a hundred prisoners in this corridor, "What's happening, what's happening?" Bells were going off and it's because there had not been that communication, not even, "We're taking industrial action some more staff will be in later."

So as soon as I had spoken to enough of them and the message got round that staff were on strike and staff will be coming in and we will be doing something. "I'm going to make sure you get breakfast now and then we'll see what regime we're running." "Oh, okay." And then I spoke to them in the dining room and said, "It looks like we are going to be running a Bank Holiday regime and we'll put some activities on." "Oh, that'll be good." And so on.

And actually we had quite a nice day and people were, and the difference was you were managing people out all the time. There's no point me trying to lock people up and contain them. It definitely, in all management of prisons it's partly compliance and agreement so the acceptance at [another prison] is 'I know you've got to lock us up for twenty four hours and we won't be out of our cells for that time.' Prisoners are very accepting and they will accept that for twenty four hours, they're not going to accept it for forty eight hours or for a week. Just like here they wouldn't have accepted being locked up at all but would be compliant and cooperative and helpful certainly throughout that and I was able to discharge in the morning, let

people meet their commitments and go to work and people saw that, they appreciated that and people saw as they left the prison that all the staff were out there and that there were very few in here.

But of course we have a lot of ancillary staff as well. Some let themselves down by saying, "Oh I can't work if the officers are on strike." but the vast majority came in and got on with it and pitched in and did well. It brings out the best in a lot of people, and the worst in some as well. But it is different here. I found the day very difficult, but I am very confident that we put on a very good performance and the prisoners did not realise how difficult it was and in fact most of the staff who came in and did the ancillary work did not realise either, did not realise how few options I had to man the evening, to staff the evening and how difficult it would have been to staff the night and what we would have done the next day if it had carried on.

We would have managed and we would have got through and I don't think that's true of some places. I don't think they could have staffed nights properly. I don't think they could have done another day without extra resources, without importing lots of police and that sort of stuff. And actually we could have carried on on that sort of basis for a few days if we'd kept the cooperation. But it was an interesting day. I'd never had that experience. Only isolated pockets and withdrawals for short periods of time. But there hasn't been a national withdrawal of labour like that. I think they were surprised at their own level of support. But I do think some of the support for it is the newness, the excitement of taking part. Certainly here I was surprised at some of the people who stood the other side of the gate. In other circumstances I wouldn't have thought they would. And I think if one or two had said, "No, I'm not going to," more would have stayed as well. Real old fashioned fear, "I can't be the only one." Huge pressure really.

## **Synthesis**

The strike was a difficult day, we didn't know what level of support there would be until we actually arrived at the prison so it wasn't till you could actually see and assess the situation that you could really decide how to deal with it. We had to involve the prisoners, keep them informed. Without them we can't maintain safety and order, fortunately prisoners are generally compliant and as long as they feel they are being treated fairly they will go along with things, but having said that there is always the risk in a place like this of something setting off a major problem. It was a challenge for me, as I'm sure it was for all the other Governors, not just to deal with the problem, but to react quickly and calmly and give the appearance of knowing what I was doing and being in control. That's where your experience and training and, perhaps, your personality come in. I don't want to deny anyone their right to take industrial action but it did mean that the prisoners lost some of their basic rights for that day, they had no activities and were kept in their cells and for some that's okay but probably not for more than a day, but others had things they wanted to do – maybe a special phone call to make, and you have to try and put yourself in their place and think about how they felt. Or if they were due in court and were expecting not to come back, that's a blow because everything is held up for them, even if only briefly. As an experience for a day it was an interesting challenge, but I would not wish to do it again – and we would have really struggled for any longer. You can't shut down a prison, and there are certain things you have to do just to maintain a most basic level of decency and humanity towards the prisoners. I think we did that and I'm content with the way we handled it.

## **Commentary**

The Prison Officer's strike of 29 August 2007 affected all prisons in England and Wales with a high level of support from the POA membership. The strike was unexpected and Governors had to deal with it without any opportunity for forward planning around this particular day. This raises an unasked question – how much do Governors rehearse possible out of the ordinary or emergency scenarios and how much of their response to incidents and issues is down to them acting in a particular, improvised way when faced with that event? Some possible events are rehearsed in job simulation assessments, such as dealing with major incidents, but there may be others that are not covered – it is difficult to foresee and plan for every possible eventuality.

The resourcefulness to improvise in such a situation together with the ability to remain calm and in apparent control is an important characteristic for Governors to have. Perhaps this goes some way to explaining the Prison Service's previous fondness for recruiting staff from the armed forces where those who possess such attributes are likely to have made them manifest if they have seen active service. A subsidiary question might also be, where there is guidance, how much do Governors adhere to it in the face of the 'real event'?

I saw both Matthew and Joshua shortly after the strike and both spoke at some length about it. It is interesting and instructive to compare their perspectives as they work in very different situations – Matthew in a closed prison, Joshua in a more open one where most of the prisoners leave the prison to work each day.

Both prisons were left with very few staff. The first issues for both Governors were security and safety. Samuel had told me in one of his interviews that this was a constant struggle for him, trying to educate staff, at all levels and in all types of posts to treat security as an essential, so that it would become second nature. He referred to working in a high security situation where constant monitoring of security levels meant that within the prison the atmosphere could be quite relaxed, though never unguarded.

The inquiry into the escapes from Whitemoor (Woodcock, 1994) pointed to the gradual erosion of security as a factor in this, a point which was taken up by John who also suggested that a contributing factor in the death of Zahid Mubarak in Feltham YOI had been a failure to search the cell properly during 'routine' checks which left the perpetrator not only with the intention of doing harm but also with the means. As both Matthew and Joshua point out, part of the process of maintaining security and safety is communicating with prisoners.

Prisons in England and Wales maintain security with the cooperation of prisoners. This cooperation allows prisons to run with comparatively few staff, as long as they are running smoothly. As Joshua suggests, when things are not running smoothly, other resources must be brought in, as happens in major disturbances. During a national strike those resources are not available within the service and must be sought elsewhere which would mean that at a time of crisis the people dealing with that crisis may be untrained and inexperienced in that particular situation. Thus although both Governors found the day challenging they were both able to cope, largely thanks to the compliance of the prisoners.

As I have mentioned, part of the process of obtaining the necessary cooperation of prisoners was ensuring that they knew what was going on and why their usual day was being disrupted. Living in a situation where freedom is curtailed and one's day is set out by a routine that is largely imposed must be difficult enough, especially when one is living in a situation that can be frightening; to wake up one morning and find that everything has suddenly changed and not know why must be unnerving for all but the most laid back and experienced (time-served) of prisoners. Thus the first job for both Governors was to let prisoners know why things were different and what they might expect of the day.

For Matthew's prisoners this was, as he says 'nothing'. No activities, no association, nobody going out or coming in. From this base of 'nothing' anything that he was able to allow prisoners became a 'perk', such as better food. He also attempted to compensate prisoners for things they missed, so he relates how he would phone family to explain why prisoners were not

able to make expected calls. Those small acts of consideration were important in keeping prisoners on side and cooperative.

Luke and Rachel also described the day as a 'lockdown'. Both felt that it would have been extremely difficult to manage for more than one day. Amongst Rachel's staff there was 100% support for the strike, while a few members of Luke's staff did work, giving him a total of forty people of varying grades and experience to keep the prison safe and secure and maintain standards of care through the day.

Joshua, on the other hand was able to operate a more normal day, though he also lowered prisoners' expectations. In the end prisoners were able to leave the prison to go to work. Joshua comments that whereas in some prisons, such as Matthew's, prisoners would have tolerated being locked in their cells for the day of the strike, though not for much longer, his would not have done so. His ability to run a more normal regime meant that he felt he could have coped for longer, whereas in other prisons longer confinement and loss of activities would have been likely to result in problems, as Matthew suggests.

Matthew does not say much about his feelings about the day, except that it was a challenge and that for one day it was interesting and 'fun'. But not fun that he would care to extend or repeat. Joshua spoke of his disappointment that so many staff had joined the strike. He tries to understand their motivation, citing factors such as peer group pressure and the novelty of the event. He was surprised that so many staff took part and felt that to some extent they had been irresponsible in that they could have waited until he and other senior managers had arrived. The dispute was with the Prison Service, not with the prison itself, the management team or the prisoners.

Part of Joshua's disappointment may have stemmed from the importance he places, and which he discussed in another conversation, on building a sense of community within the prison. If staff walk out on strike this suggests that the community is fragile if not actually fractured, because the sense of shared and mutual responsibility is threatened. It can also be related to Brun

and Cooper's missing pieces model in that it left him feeling unsupported by his staff, including some whom he had felt would not have taken part in the strike. Support does not only come from those who are above one in a hierarchy it is reciprocal between levels and thus for Governors a large part of that support, or lack of it, comes from those they lead within the Prison.

Both Matthew and Joshua were happy with the way they handled the day of the strike. Matthew experienced some minor, understandable problems with prisoners who were anticipating release. It necessitated the exercise of their leadership skills and the fact that both did take the prison through the day with minimal disruption shows that these were both appropriate and effective. In terms of Kempster's model of leadership learning it represents a learning experience as critical role enactment and both Matthew and Joshua subsequently took the opportunity to reflect critically on the day, to appraise their own performance and to learn from it.

One interesting feature of the strike is that although it was a national day of action its effects were so varied across the service. As the examples of Matthew and Joshua demonstrate this is partly down to the wide variation in the nature of prisons themselves. A high security prison will approach a day with only skeleton staff very differently to the way an open or resettlement prison will. Young offender institutions and those which hold juveniles will also have to react differently because the expectations of prisoner reactions and behaviour are likely to be different. Having said that, the crucial element for all is likely to be communication and cooperation between those staff left in the prison and the prisoners, as both Matthew and Joshua relate.

A second interesting feature is that neither Governor mentions outside support received during this day. This may simply be because of my failure to raise this at the time, but one might expect that Area Managers and others at higher levels would contact the Governors at least to offer moral support and encouragement on a difficult day, but the impression I came away with was that both Matthew and Joshua had got on and managed with the resources available to them within the prison. One hopes that, as part of the respect and support elements of Brun and Cooper's missing pieces

model, the higher levels of management of the Prison Service did express their appreciation of the difficulties the strike had presented and of the skill and resourcefulness of Governors and staff in dealing with it and attempting to maintain security and decency. As the strike provided a learning experience for Governors it is also important, as in Kempster's model, that Governors receive feedback that helps them reflect on their performance.

**How long to run?**

STABILITY

FAMILY

COMMITMENT

CONTROL

IMPACT

CHANGE

TIMESCALE

CHALLENGE

CHOICE

AVAILABILITY

MATTHEW – I'm hoping to [stay to see the expansion finished and everything settled and working], one of the places I could have gone from here on promotion came up recently, and I didn't apply. I didn't apply on the basis that I like it here and I should stay here. It was nearer and more money and all sorts of domestically nice things, but actually I'm still enjoying this.

JOHN – I decided that retiring at 60 wasn't for me, I'm too young to retire, but that's caused problems.

JOSHUA – Yes, I saw [the figures published in Hansard of how long Governors have been in post], I think I was on there in the four year bracket when they published it. I maybe should have gone, there's a huge pressure in the Service to feel that you should be moving on, and I feel that professionally but it's all tied up with where you are personally and I've got a strong commitment for my children to do their GCSEs in one place and to honour that. And because they're different ages, they're a couple of years apart, actually that's quite a long commitment.

SAMUEL – I'm safe enough, and I'd want to do, I've got a lot to learn. I think I could do a very good, important job here and enjoy it for the next two years. After I get past the two year mark then I'll start to think, "Right, before you tell me, I'll make a bid for somewhere." And it's, I, I mean I love living in [this region]; I've no desire to leave [here] and live anywhere else really. They would not have any qualms about moving me somewhere if it suited them, they'd say Samuel, go to this big jail, in the Midlands, wherever, get home at weekends.

JOHN – Well it's caused a problem because conveniently on the [date] next year I would have walked away and they would have appointed a new Governor and everything would have been all change. Now that I've announced that I'm staying they're in panic mode cos they don't know what to do.

SAMUEL – I wish it was down to me, probably two to three, that's the expectation, but I don't know, that would probably be right, I think. And I'm never quite sure of this one. Some people, some of the people I respect,

who are Governing Governors have said to me don't stay more than three, you know, because you cease to have an impact and that's the big thing.

JOHN – But I get the feeling that I'm now an embarrassment because the expectation was that they had someone groomed ready to take my place [next year] and I'm not going now. What I am fearful of is that they will sideline me, it's a fear that I have.

JOSHUA – So one of the things the Chief Inspector always gets upset about is that whenever something is wrong it's always a new team will change things in short order, the response is always, "We'll install a new team and it's improving." But there's no, "We've really made this commitment, four or five years and that's going to be it and at the end of that time you can really judge it," because in five years' time there might have been three sets of, three new Governors and three new teams. So who's done what and whose delivered what? I don't think things happen by magic, they happen by people getting down and doing the work.

SAMUEL – Plus, the powers that be that control our lives in the Prison Service will make it known that it is time to move on and suddenly you realise, well for me I suddenly after four or five years, well, I'd been in four years then, it was the notion of other people taking control of my life and I thought, "I don't like that." I've always been in control of my own life.

JOSHUA – I think it's really underestimated what it takes to sustain change and embed change. I don't think it's so hard to go in and make a series of changes. To really turn in a new direction and embed things and then see that it works and maintain that it works. Those timescales are more like three or four years, rather than one or two. And what tends to happen is you get short term increases and short term benefits and a lot of those may be just on the newness factor and the drive and commitment of the change process by bringing in somebody new. But sustaining that and delivering that is probably a four to five year, and actually that would make more sense in career terms to do solid jobs with continuity and see things through and then we'll get the real measure.

RACHEL – I'd like to stay three or four years, and then move on. I want to stay in this area, so I might have to leave the Prison Service. Just moving from one prison to another won't be a challenge anymore and there aren't many prisons around here.

LUKE – I'm perfectly content here at the moment. I'll give it about three years, then I'll look around for something else. I've got another thirteen years so I'll have to think about what I'm going to do. I don't want to let the Service just tell me to go somewhere.

MARK – Everybody has different styles, but I also believe that, I mean you've mentioned it; it is about adding some stability to the establishment. It's being able to set, and it's just that continuous improvement, if you like.

JOSHUA – And that isn't really what happens. You get a whole series of firefighting manoeuvres and change. Are you going to take time to assess what is good of what you've got, or are you in a mindset of 'well I'm here and new dynamism and change for change sake and taking people with you?' And it does generate a culture of doing that and also a culture which rewards that of course and the people who are the most dynamic, the most fearless. But sometimes you don't see the outcomes. You don't know whether it's really been done or whether it's a bit cosmetic.

MATTHEW – Yes, I've been here 18 months, yes, it'll be about 4 years by the time I'm done. And then it'll be nice to stay a little while, that would suit me. That would fit well with me.

JOSHUA – There were a couple of things after Christmas, we had a really good audit and you think maybe that's the time to do that because you look for new challenges. I mean there is another one here because there's an expansion programme, they're going to put a new unit in and increase by twenty five percent and I'm quite pleased to do that. I think I would feel a bit flat otherwise without that one new project. There's also, there's availability, there's what your Area Managers think of you, what jobs are available, all the network things. All of which I'm sure will be in your research. I don't want to move just for the sake of moving.

MARK – Really, plus just different challenges, because once you’ve been in establishments for a certain amount of time you know you, I think it’s important that you need to be bringing in, especially since I’ve been in the higher management ranks, if you like, that it’s sometimes nice to have a fresh pair of eyes come in and you can take some work forward to certain stages then maybe it needs a different impetus to come in. So I would hope to be here for about four to five years.

JOSHUA – To be honest I’ve never fancied working away from home on the Monday to Friday commute, to live at home at the weekend, because I feel I’d miss that middle teenage bit and you never get that again. They’ll be gone to college after ‘A’ levels, and I’m reluctant to do that. So I feel a bit caught sometimes because obviously I see one or two things that I’d really like to do. There is the turnover, things do come round again.

SAMUEL – You’re reaching the top of this tree and yet you’re to a certain extent losing that control and it’s happened to some people I’ve known, that have got moved. So I think I’d say that, I mean I would be talking all the time, well not all the time, but once a year I’d be reviewing things with [my Area Manager] and he’d say ‘what’s next?’ I mean the expectation is that I will, there is an expectation that I will govern a bigger jail when I leave here.

JOSHUA – And I’m getting a bit older and there is a lot to be said for the satisfaction of doing a job and continuity and seeing things through. And I do enjoy this job, and I know that a lot of jobs are going in, taking over, sort of troubleshooting, turning round, redirecting. Which is all really valid, really good, possibly something you are aware of in your research and it’s definitely horses for courses and at different stages and times of your career. And I’m not sure I really want that. And I couldn’t have done that this year.

SAMUEL – They say you cease to have an impact, whereas staff and prisoners will complain about the lack of continuity, that Governors aren’t there very long and then they move on and I can see a bit of that as well, but I also, I can recognise, that after a period of time you, as the Number

One Governor, I think it's different for some of the other grades, you can lose the impact. Yeah, and it's not good for the prison. Apart from yourself, you know the jail can just start to dip down a bit, we keep trying to get the jails, you know you get to a certain level and rather than dip down you try to get up again keep trying to improve the prison. That's something I would aspire to, keep moving it up. Well there's only so much you can do, you really need a new person to come in then and take it on a bit further and keep it going.

MATTHEW – Absolutely. So I'm hoping to stay on and see it through if I can. If I can that's great, if I can't...

SAMUEL – Plus you can get burnt out yourself, I think.

## **Synthesis**

It's hard to judge because you want to have some stability for the prison but you don't want to get stale or bored cos then you're no good to anyone. The expectation is that you'll move, that you'll want to move. I don't think there's much recognition that you could find a niche where you're happy and you could keep doing good work for a few years, more than a few. There are some people who have stayed in one place longer, but they're unusual. Seems to me that once someone shows they can handle a particular place well the pressure is on them to move. Whereas maybe they should be able to stay till they start feeling a need to move on. Maybe the Service needs to encourage stability a bit more rather than pushing the idea of rapid promotion all the time. I suppose they do that to attract bright applicants but you'd hope the bright, capable ones can see that there's another perspective. It's all very well initiating change but getting people to really accept and assimilate new ideas is more difficult. That's where you need some stability so that staff know they can't just wait you out till the next Governor comes along with their own set of flashy ideas.

And you, as an individual are going to have different needs and expectations as you go through your career, and that's all going to tie in with relationships and children if you have them. And how you feel about things at different stages of your life. But I'm not happy that I might just get told it's time to move. I want to feel I have some choice and control over when and where I go next. I think that's a matter of courtesy.

At the moment I'm thinking four years. I might get fed up of it in a couple of years; I've found that in other things, but that's what I'm aiming for now.

## **Commentary**

In considering the decision whether to stay at or move on from an establishment Governors are faced with a number of factors which affect both their ability to make that decision and the decision that they make.

Prison Service culture affects how long Governors stay in a particular post. Joshua comments on the 'huge pressure' to move on. Surveys of time in post (Prison Reform Trust 2003; Hansard, 2006) suggest that few Governors stay in post for longer than two years although in a telephone survey I carried out for the Prison Governors' Association most respondents felt that three to four years was the optimum time to stay in a post. Joshua also remarks on the use of managerial change as a way of addressing problems within a prison, noting that this practice has been criticised by HM Inspector of Prisons. Joshua feels that the culture of the Prison Service is focused on implementing change rather than on seeing that change take root within the Service or in individual prisons. He implies that this can be a more difficult aspect of the role of Governors. He also comments that before attempting to make changes it is necessary to take time to assess the situation; suggesting that at times the Service expresses a culture of change for the sake of change.

In a similar vein John spoke in our first conversation about being asked to go and 'firefight' in a prison where there were longstanding problems earlier in his career. He describes being the last in a line of managers who had been asked to spend a year at this prison with the promise of then receiving a posting of their choice. John took the job but with the proviso that he should be permitted to stay at the prison until the effects of any changes he implemented became apparent and could be assessed.

Linked to this is the point made by Mark that prisons are expected to improve constantly. Samuel suggests, as does Mark, that after a time a Governor can cease to have an impact. This raises the unasked question of 'does that always matter?' Having an impact suggests dramatic change, yet there may be underlying, more subtle ways of making improvements or indeed times when a prison needs to just stand still for a while. John alluded to this in one of our meetings when he said that he and his management

team had made all the big, obvious changes and as he got to know the prison better he was finding out about and addressing subtler and less obvious, and possibly more insidious problems where improvements were needed and could be made.

Liu and Dale (2009) in a discussion of shared mental models suggest that groups who work together over longer periods may be more efficient and effective possibly because they develop familiarity with and understanding of one another's methods of working and strengths and weaknesses. They also experience less demand for adjustments to new styles of working because of changes of leadership or team members.

Mark, elsewhere in our conversation, emphasised the importance of teamwork and participation by staff at all levels, as well as prisoners; a point also made by John in our first meeting. Thus part of the role of Governors is to be receptive to suggestions and to facilitate improvements and changes that originate from or are implemented by other staff, prisoners, or outside bodies working within the prison. It is important that Governors do not block good ideas and that they feel that they have the autonomy to allow these to be put into action. However, they do not necessarily need to be constantly striving for improvement themselves, but to provide an environment which is receptive to and encourages ideas and commitment. And, to return to Joshua's view, sometimes it is necessary to pause and take stock. Rachel drew attention to 'short-termism' in the Prison service during our first conversation, citing this as a source of frustration. This was also raised by number of the Governors who responded to the Prison Governors' Association survey (PGA, 2002).

A second major issue which the Governors raised in relation to the question of how long to stay in a particular post is that of how much control they are actually able to exercise over this decision. Samuel feels that he has lost control he previously had over decisions relating to his career and moves he makes. Prison Governors, like many senior civil servants, are expected to be mobile. Samuel hopes that he'll be able to avoid being peremptorily moved to another prison and he, like other Governors, feels the need to be proactive as he feels the Prison Service would 'have no qualms' about

expecting him to relocate. Looking at this from a different angle, Rachel feels that her desire to stay in the area she currently lives in may mean she has to leave the Prison Service as there are few positions available to her. For Rachel and other younger Governors such as Matthew, this also ties in with the length of their remaining career in that if a younger Governor does not wish or is not able to move to higher management or a Headquarters post they may not wish to face a long (25–30 years or more) period of moving from prison to prison.

Like Samuel, Luke also plans to try to take control of his next move and although he has fewer years before retirement than Rachel or Matthew he is aware of the need to plan for his remaining career.

John is in a different position having been expected to retire at 60 and decided against this. He feels that this is ‘an embarrassment’ to the Prison Service who, as part of succession and career planning, may have already identified potentially suitable candidates to take over from John. Juggling succession and career planning can, as this situation demonstrates, be a complex and difficult task. For example, recruits to fast tracking schemes are given to expect that they will become Governors in a comparatively short time, as one would expect, but this is dependent not only on candidate performance but also in the availability of a suitable post and with only 138 Governing Governor posts and one or two more Deputy posts these are quite limited. John expresses his fear of being sidelined or, in another conversation, being given an ‘unpalatable choice’ which would effectively force him out of the Service. He told me he had discussed this issue with his mentor who had himself left the Prison Service in preference to the post he was offered.

Families are also important in career planning and decisions for Governors. Joshua says he would not wish to work away from home and that he does not want to disrupt his children’s education or miss their teenage years. A similar point was made by Mark in describing his career; he chose to stay at one particular prison for longer than he otherwise might have in order not to disrupt his children's ‘A’ levels.

Matthew, Joshua and Luke all say that they are currently enjoying their jobs. Matthew chose not to pursue an opportunity that would have had some advantages for him. He wishes to see changes through at his current prison. Joshua feels that he should perhaps have moved but changes at the prisons have given him new challenges to deal with. Additionally he had some injury problems over the period when we were meeting and he felt that he would have found it difficult to cope in a new environment during that time.

Spending only a short time in a particular post may discourage a sense of ownership and personal responsibility such that Governors who know they will be moving on quite rapidly may feel less of a commitment to a particular prison. Another side to this is that staff of other grades, who tend to stay longer in one place, may feel that they can 'wait out' a particular Governor if they do not like their approach and hope that the next one who comes along may be more to their liking.

Of the nine Governors who took part in this study, during the three and a half years from starting the interviews to completing the writing Mark left the Prison Service, Rebecca moved to Headquarters, Matthew moved to another prison and Ruth was promoted to Governing Governor and took up her first post, joining the research later than her colleagues. The remaining five were all in the same posts, although Rachel was hoping to move on to a non-operational post following the implementation of the revised NOMs structure which had led to her working closely with her Regional Director of Offender Management.

In making decisions about when to try to move on in their careers Governors, and their managers, need to consider both what is best for an individual Governor and what is best for the prison. As John suggests, there may also be wider issues of succession planning within the Prison Service. There is some cynicism as to how much the wishes of Governors are taken into account by higher management which tie in with some of Brun and Cooper's missing pieces, notably feeling respected at work and being able to participate in decision making. If, as some of the Governors suggest, they feel they are at risk of having someone else make decisions about their

futures without full consultation and respect for their wishes they are unlikely to feel either valued or respected.

## **Rebecca's soliloquy**

It would be a push factor, I think, how senior managers are treated. I think sometimes we're not very good at treating senior managers well. So I think that would be a push factor and that's not to say my, you know, my treatment's inhumane, it's just that I think things like work-life balance, being supported, unconditionally being supported and not feeling like a pawn in someone's game I suppose. It's that kind of stuff. I think there's an expectation, there's almost a, you go through kind of a, or maybe it's kind of my experience of senior managers. I think you go through a stage where people take real consideration of work-life balance, you know, look after work-life balance. But it's completely accepted that you cannot be a senior manager in thirty nine hours a week, you just can't. It's impossible to be a good manager in that period of time.

It's not like somebody's saying, "Oh Rebecca, work less hours," cos they want to say, "Oh, your KPIs need to improve and you want to read this and there's this new policy and there's that new policy and your scorecard reading is kind of [growly noise]," and you kind of think, "Ohhh." So I think, I think that's difficult because there's a recognition that the job's changed but there's very little being done to make it manageable cos the price is paid in your home life rather than your work life, you know. I suppose ultimately the work will suffer because you can't do your best in that situation. You can't, when you're tired and stressed and you haven't got a home life, you know, it does take its toll so work will suffer. But I think there is something about, I do wonder if more could be done, and I don't know what really because I think it's a resource issue.

I think there's also a generational change going on in the Prison Service at the moment. Some of the, I would call leadership skills that I have in terms of my people skills, I've not always benefitted from my senior managers. For example my last performance report my line manager never used my first name all the way through it and that, actually, wouldn't be so bad if you worked thirty nine hours a week and had a fantastic home life and you were being paid the same as everyone else cos everyone else is doing a similar job.

I think it is about balance actually. I suppose I kind of visualise it as some kind of see-saw effect where you don't mind giving a bit because you know it's going to come back. But sometimes you feel, I think I've had some very difficult jobs coming here, you just feel as though you're giving all the time.

### **Commentary**

Rebecca identifies as problematic a number of factors that are included in Brun and Cooper's missing pieces approach to employee well-being. The principal factor she speaks of here is the issue of work-life balance, which is also referred to elsewhere by Joshua when he comments on 'long hours culture' as being counterproductive. Rachel also made reference to this in our second meeting when she commented that she would not wish to take up post-graduate study as part of professional development because by the end of a day in the prison she is simply too tired. It may be that if the Prison Service is committed to high levels of continuing professional development for Governors then it needs to address the issue of how Governors can take this on as an addition to an already heavy workload.

Rebecca suggests that at certain stages in the promotion ladder work-life balance is taken seriously and treated as important. However, she feels strongly that Governors are expected to work long hours to the detriment of their lives outside the prison and that, as Joshua also suggests, this can have a damaging effect on their work, as well as their general well-being.

Rebecca also says that she feels unsupported, another element of Brun and Cooper's model, though she acknowledges that this may be part of her individual experience and related to particular line managers she has worked with and the relationships she has had with them. Indeed, when we met for the second time Rebecca had a new line manager and felt much more positive about her relationship with him. She felt that he reflected the types of change in management style that she alludes to in this extract. A move away from the kind of impersonal approach that would allow a line manager to refer to someone in the third person throughout an appraisal. Other Governors, including Rachel, commented on the difference in approach between Area Managers. Rachel remarked on the difference she

had found in moving from one area of the country to another - that her new line manager was much more supportive than her previous one whom she described as 'useless'.

Rebecca comments briefly in this extract on the subject of pay. She also alludes to this at greater length at another point in this interview commenting that Governors doing an equivalent job to hers are being paid considerably more. Several of the Governors, including Matthew, John and Ruth referred to anomalies in the grading system for senior managers although Matthew also spoke about steps that were being taken to remedy these. Ruth remarked that within her Senior Management Team there were members who were line managing people who were on a higher grade than themselves. She felt that this was an instance where personality was important – that some people would feel uncomfortable and find it difficult to work in that situation whereas others, probably more confident and able to inspire personal respect in addition to that accruing to their position, would not find it a problem.

It is interesting that the lines I quote here from Rebecca came in answer to a question which I asked with the intention of opening a discussion around the optimum time for a Governing Governor to stay at an individual prison. However Rebecca took it as referring to how long she might stay in the Prison Service. This emphasises the importance of the factors she suggests as potential 'push factors' which might cause her to leave the service. (Rebecca did leave this posting and move away from operational management.)

Looking at this again I wonder if it reflects a similar attitude to that which pertained in the requirements for ethical approval for this project; that some people can 'look after themselves'. As I have suggested with regard to the ethics of the project, things can be more complex than they initially seem. In the context of employee well-being it is important to remember that having reached a position of comparatively high autonomy does not mean that employees, which Governors still are, should not have their needs considered, both in their own interests and those of the Prison Service.

## **Supporting Players**

ISOLATION

TRUST

PEERS

OPENNESS

MENTORS

KICKING THE CAT

AREA MANAGERS

CHALLENGE

TRUST

DEPUTIES

JOHN – I felt that I was ready for it, but what I wasn't ready for, I think, was the isolation. But that isolation was of my own making because of course when you are working away from home, when you're working at home you can go home and talk to your wife, but when you go home to an empty house it's different.

REBECCA – I think that's probably quite right actually. I think it's quite an isolating job really because I suppose there's only so much of being a Governor that you want people to see. What you want people to see is the leadership, strong leadership.

JOSHUA – It's about establishing relationships and building them up, with trust, with people who are similarly motivated. But it's a bit hit or miss to be honest. I mean, what did I say at the beginning, you know? You learn how not to do things. You often work with people who don't share your commitment, your values, who do things in a sometimes pretty reprehensible way. And when you work with people like that I don't think you feel personally supported.

REBECCA – You can't, whereas more junior ranks you could always go to someone and say, "Oh for fuck's sake you'll never guess what they've done now." And you can close the door and you'd have about three fags in quick succession and you'd just get it off your chest. But when you get to, probably Deputy Governor as well, and certainly Governor, you've nowhere to do it. You can't just say, "Oh he's really pissed me off."

JOSHUA – Maybe that's about going through your career at the same time, at the same level. And I haven't and geographically I've moved. And to be honest I feel a little bit isolated from colleagues, which is to do with that movement, and to do with me and personality. And sometimes I think that would be nice.

REBECCA – In that respect it's quite an isolating position to be in, because you don't have that 'he's just pissed me off' kind of thing cos you can't as a Governor do it. Cos you've always got to appear in control haven't you?

JOSHUA – Do I feel supported? It's very much individuals, it's about who they are. I have had long periods where I have not felt supported at all.

MATTHEW – It is quite difficult thinking back, I mean, my friendships were with Prison Officers because they were my peers and all of a sudden jumping out of that into a managerial role, not even at first line manager level, without going through the same cohort who may or may not jump into management, I just jumped ahead. And you moved establishments on promotion. But I must admit that, initially, even though I was promoted, I identified with the Prison Officer Grades, also because I was relatively young.

SAMUEL – I've worked with people, one person I trained with as well, we're good friends. We give honest support to each other. And the department tries to. I mean, there's supposed to be something but I got missed off the list. There's something for new Governors, you go on a two day event.

MATTHEW – I think there were about eighteen or twenty Principal Officers and they were a very supportive group to me. They were different, but they were very supportive. And I very quickly felt part of that group rather than any other. So I wasn't identifying with my management in the Governor grades, I was identifying with the Principal Officer grades. I've maintained friendships from every point in my service.

REBECCA – I've met the other Governors at an area meeting once. The support I get now is from friends, but the only other Governor that I regularly speak to is one who I was Deputy Governor to.

JOSHUA – It's curious, that is a curious thing about the Service, that it has this sort of delineation of Governing Governor. And we do get together; it's not that I don't enjoy getting together, swapping stories and notes with people. And you see people once a year, something like that. And that can be mutually supportive; you do have a lot in common with people who are doing the same job.

REBECCA – I mean we get together for area meetings, Governing Governor meetings once a month. No I wouldn't really say that I was developing a network here really. And I don't know whether that's unusual or not. I think I was operating under a misbelief that being a Governing

Governor within an area's quite collegiate in its approach. But it's not, not at all.

JOSHUA – You feel a bit on your own, but without going into specifics, that's how organisations work. That's how structures work, and on a simple level I've never thought that you need to like people to get on with them, to work with them. You do need a certain amount of respect for people and to be able to be honest with them.

MATTHEW – That's been my experience, that you sort of slot into your peer group. And there's all sorts of mechanisms that allow that to happen I suppose. Even at Governing Governor level where in the establishment there isn't anyone else there's enough in terms of meetings and conferences for you to actually feel part of the Governing Governor group even though you're quite geographically dispersed. It's been an informal support network, but I prefer that, I'm quite comfortable with that.

RUTH – Other Governors are hugely supportive. People like \_\_\_\_, do you know him? They are just good if you want to have a moan. And \_\_\_\_, I've known him a long time. We travelled to conference together and that was really nice, just to have a chat.

SAMUEL – There's a couple of people that, we talk on the phone. And that's good. There's a couple of colleagues around the country that I know well and feel very safe with. That informal support is critical.

MATTHEW – And I know that if I'm dealing with an issue that I can't easily see a way through I'll telephone a number of people and say, “ This is what's going on, what do you think?”

JOSHUA – In that sense I think I am a little bit unusual because I do think that most colleagues really value an informal network and retain a close circle of colleagues, peer Governors, which gives that sort of support. I think I feel a bit, actually I feel a bit disappointed that I haven't got that in quite the same way. Which is not the same as saying that there aren't a number of people that I could ring up and say, “What do you think?” and that would be safe and confidential. I just don't seem to have the same

network of long term friends going through the same process at the same time.

REBECCA – I've now got a mentor as well, which helps. I've seen her about three times. I identified her myself, so it was my effort to do that really. She's inside the Prison Service and that's quite helpful, just to have somebody else to go to. I suppose it feels a bit like, I don't know, safety blanket or something. Just somebody at the end of the phone that I know I can phone if I need advice that's not going to go to my line manager saying, "Oh, she didn't know this." It's just accepting that there's someone there for you to go and speak to.

RUTH – \_\_\_\_ is my mentor. I don't see very much of him but I can always phone him and ask his advice.

JOHN – I'd been here about eighteen months, and they said new in post Governors are offered a mentor, and they gave me a choice of people, most of whom had either been driven out of the service because of their strange activities, or I felt were not the sort of role models that I would ever want. And I said 'No, I'd rather choose someone from outside the service.' I had a look round, and it occurred to me that probably the one person who I had learnt a lot of my skills from through our paths crossing an interweaving was [previous boss]. And he just seemed the ideal person and someone I could trust, because mentoring is a particular thing that requires complete trust between two people. It's good, it works for me anyway.

SAMUEL – I have a lot of contact with the Area Manager. We know each other very well; he mentors me as well as supervises me.

RUTH – \_\_\_\_'s [Area Manager] excellent, absolutely excellent.

SAMUEL – I have a sufficiently good relationship that I can talk through in confidence. I can say whatever I want and it's fine to have that conversation because he doesn't see it as a sign of weakness and I don't feel it as a sign of weakness.

RUTH – Have you met \_\_\_\_? He's a great bloke, absolutely amazing. But he's also very measured and very realistic and very honest.

REBECCA – \_\_\_\_\_'s very much like that, but I think he's an example of a different style of manager in the Prison Service who recognises people in their entirety. That we're not all automata that come to work and deliver, but there is a different way. So it's nice to have him around. What \_\_\_\_\_ does as well which is nice to have in an Area Manager, I'll quite often ask a member of staff how they've done in an exam or something. And I just sort of thought everybody did it, but they don't. I think there are an increasing number of senior managers, probably at Deputy Governor, Governor and Area Manager level that adopt that approach, and it's only when you come across something else that you think, "Oh gosh, not everybody's like that yet." then it jars a bit.

MARK – There's also the relationship between the Governor and Deputy Governor. It's probably quite crucial, I believe, in regard to how the establishment operates. And it's being able to have that frank, open and honest conversation behind closed doors with your Deputy Governor. And you need to be open and honest enough to recognise that you have weaknesses.

REBECCA – I think once I've got a new Deputy Governor in place and have built a relationship with them then I probably will have that kind of being able to go and kick the cat in their office kind of thing. Because that's what Deputy Governors do, they're good for that. But equally as a Deputy your biggest frustration is the Governor as well, so you as a Deputy need somewhere to go as well.

RUTH – there are issues about Deputy Governor and Governor having similar temperaments. We're both Librans, not that I believe in star signs but we have a joke sometimes: "How do you expect us to make a decision?" He helps me to think things through. He is very reflective and probably two slightly different styles would be better.

REBECCA – It's about finding your feet really because it is such an important relationship, and a relationship not just between [my Deputy] and I and the Senior Management Team, because [my Deputy] will do a lot of firefighting for me that I never see. I think he's just like anybody when they

get promoted and you realise that you only ever see a tiny tip of the iceberg and there's a whole lot floating underneath and you never saw that.

RUTH – I've got a new Deputy Governor now, \_\_\_\_'s moved on. I've got more management support in there. The Deputy, he's replaced \_\_\_\_ who's moved on. He's very, very sound. We work well together. He's much more of a doer and I know that if I say I need this doing he'll do it and he'll do it pretty quickly and I won't be forever having to go back and say, "Have you done it?" He's also much better at challenging me, so he'll actually say, "Do you think that's right?"

I've got a new head of residence. He's got a lot of credibility, he won't take any crap.

SAMUEL – I have a Deputy Governor, whom I appointed. Your relationship with your Deputy Governor, as I knew when I was Deputy, is the most important one you've got. That was part of the package, that I could appoint my own Deputy, which I did. Someone who is very good, totally different from me, which is what I wanted. So I would hope there is, it's still early days, support there. And I get support from around the gaol, from staff, even some prisoners will tell you if you're moving in the right direction.

MATTHEW – You tend to rely on your Deputy to run the day to day prison to allow you to do the work. You need somebody to do, occasionally, unthreatening talk through our ideas, 'What am I going to do about this?' You need someone to cast a critical eye over things and to feel that they're able to be critical. I've worked in places previously where the Governor and Deputy have, obviously to everybody, not had that kind of relationship.

RUTH – Absolutely, the Deputy is key to running the prison without a doubt.

## **Synthesis**

I'm new to this area so my support network tends to be with people I trained with or worked with in the past. You develop some close, trusting relationships; people you're happy to ask for advice and you know what they say will be sound and well thought-out. And those relationships are reciprocal. I hope to make some of those kind of relationships with other Governors in the area.

Sometimes you just need someone you can sound off to. There isn't really anyone in the Prison Service – maybe the Deputy if your relationship is good. I'm working on that and I think it will be, you just can't expect that from day one. You do have to trust your Dep. they are so much responsible for how things run and they are making decisions in your name. You don't want to have to be checking on them all the time. You need them to have their own perspective and to be prepared to question you.

I've heard the Area Manager here is good. I haven't had that much to do with her yet, but her reputation is good – that she knows her stuff and she's honest and takes an interest. I appreciate that, I don't like impersonal management.

I've got a mentor, a Governor I worked with before. We'll meet up every few months and I can phone him if I want. He's someone I have a high opinion of, though we're quite different.

I think in a job like this family and relationships are important. I don't think it's easy for our families cos we do work long hours and sometimes my partner or one of the kids will sort of prod me to remind me that I can't just let work take over. I need that stability. You need something else in your life, relationships, other interests, things that take you away from it. And not to be so knackered or stressed that you can't enjoy other things and spending time with other people. I guess maybe some of the stress I feel now will go away when I've been here a bit longer.

## **Commentary**

In this scene Governors talk about their experiences of isolation and about the support they receive. In each prison there is one Governing Governor and this is likely to lead to some sense of separation and isolation within the prison. Of course, as Rebecca points out, this does not only apply to Governing Governors but to Deputies and, quite possibly, others working within the Prison who are 'one of a kind' such as chaplains or finance managers who may at times feel that their work and the problems they face are not understood by those around them. Many prisons in England and Wales are geographically quite remote and this, together with the heavy workload of Governors, can make it difficult for Governors to meet with and develop relationships with their peers.

John misses the support of family. Other Governors commented that this was important to them, although Ruth felt that as her husband works in the private sector he does not always understand the difficulties and 'some of the crap that we put up with'. In an unrecorded interview Rachel said that she 'sounds off' to her partner who is also employed by the Prison Service and so is able to understand the issues and context she has to deal with.

Joshua makes the point that one can feel unsupported in an environment where colleagues have different values and levels of commitment. In this situation Governors may feel a lack of empathy and support which will be emphasised because they are, as Rebecca suggests, expecting to be supported by like-minded colleagues.

Within the work environment Governors identify four main sources of support: peers, mentors, Area Managers and Deputy Governors.

Looking first at support from peers, Governors have differing experiences of this. Matthew talks about how his peer group, and with it his support network, changed as he was promoted through the Service. He links this to his comparative youth, suggesting that he had more in common with staff on lower grades who tended to be younger than those in more senior positions. This appears to have changed to some extent over recent years. The PGA survey (PGA 2002) and Bryans' paper (2000) both found that Governors were typically in their fifties. These older Governors are now

reaching retiring age and a number of younger Governors have gone through the accelerated promotion schemes that the Prison Service has run over intervening years.

Matthew also says that skipping promotional grades and moving prisons affect the ability to form supportive peer relationships. Both Rebecca and Joshua point to geographical mobility as an impediment to the formation of supportive peer relationships.

Joshua also feels it is partly a matter of personality and that it is not necessary to like people to work well with them. He feels it is respect and trust that are important.

Matthew, and the other Governors, feel more supported. Matthew suggests that in spite of the singularity of the Governors' role they do have sufficient opportunities to meet up through area meetings and conferences to enable support networks to develop. Although regional networks may seem an obvious source of peer support, Governors also operate within a national network and for some, such as Samuel, peer support comes from outside the region from longstanding friends or former colleagues within the service. For Ruth, in contrast, much support, at various levels, comes from within the region where she has spent all of her career and has been able to develop a network.

Within that context Joshua expresses some sadness that he has not built up a network of long-term friends over his years in the Service.

One issue that is raised in the context of peer support is that of safety. Governors need to feel that they have peers they can trust and who will not interpret the need for advice or support as a sign of weakness. The pressure to perform and to appear confident and competent is very strong for some of these Governors.

A second source of support is from mentoring. All newly appointed Governing Governors are entitled to a mentor, although as John makes clear it may be some time after appointment when this is offered. Indeed Samuel did not have a designated mentor while we were meeting, although he regarded his Area Manager as fulfilling this role. Of those, John, Rebecca

and Ruth, who talked about their mentors Rebecca and Ruth had mentors from within the Prison Service while John's was a retired Governor whom he had previously worked with and held in high esteem. The mentoring relationship was seen as a useful one, giving a source of confidential advice and support from a trusted and disinterested source.

The third source of support is the Area Manager. Governors in one area I visited experienced changes of Area Manager during the course of the research and the nature of their relationships with their Area Manager changed as the incumbent changed. Those who commented felt far more positive towards the Area Manager who was in post at the end of the research than they had towards his predecessors. He was obviously held in high regard, both personally and professionally. Rebecca suggests that this particular Area Manager embodies a changing approach to management in the Prison Service, one that is more aware of the individuality of staff and does not treat them, as Rebecca vividly puts it, as automata. This contrasts with Rebecca's previous description of an Area Manager referring to her in an impersonal manner as 'she' throughout an appraisal.

The fourth source of support for Governors is the Deputy. This relationship is seen, as Ruth puts it, as 'key' in the running of the prison. Governors view it as a relationship that must be based on trust and respect – as Matthew observes, other members of staff can tell when this is not the case. The Deputy is possibly the only person within the prison who has licence, and is expected, to tell the Governor if they think the Governor is taking the wrong approach to something. This puts them in an inherently risky position as at some point they are likely to need recommendation from the Governor in order to advance their own career, thus Deputies must develop considerable diplomatic skills to cope with this role. Also, as Rebecca points out, the Governor and the need to 'second guess' him or her which Luke described is the major source of frustration for Deputies. John told me during one of our meetings that when he was promoted to Governing Governor he gave his successor as Deputy an advice sheet on dealing with his new boss.

The role of the Deputy within the Prison is a very important one. As Matthew says they are responsible for the day to day running of the prison. In this way the Deputy can be seen as the senior manager in the prison while the Governing Governor provides leadership in developing a vision for continuing development. Both Rachel and Rebecca commented that on first promotion to Governor they tended to try to carry on the role of Deputy in addition to their new responsibilities. This was a role they knew, knew they had performed well and had been secure in.

Ruth, Rebecca and Samuel had all been in the position of being able to appoint new deputies although I was told that the amount of influence that the Governor has over this important role is variable. They all felt it was important that the Deputy, as well as possessing the skills needed for the role, should complement the Governor in personality and style of working. Ruth alludes to this when she jokes about her first Deputy having a similar temperament to hers and that making it difficult for them to make decisions. She values her current Deputy not just for his general competence but because he will challenge her and push her to take action.

Interestingly, none of the Governors spoke about Headquarters as a source of support. I cannot take this to indicate that they all felt Headquarters to be unsupportive, but it is clear that this was not one of the possible answers to this question that came to mind straight away.

In terms of Brun and Cooper's model a good working relationship with their Deputy would be a strong element in improving the well-being of Governors and a poor one would be severely detrimental to this. A good relationship with their Deputy can help to fulfill the need for several of Brun and Cooper's elements of well-being – recognition, respect, support and workload. A poor relationship, which could damage these, could have a severely detrimental effect on the well-being and the performance of both Governor and Deputy with severe negative effects for the Prison as a whole. Thus it would seem important that Governors do have a say in the appointment of their Deputy, although it may be that they need to start out with an experienced Deputy – a safe pair of hands – while they establish their Governing style, being given the opportunity to review the

appointment after some time in post when they are familiar with the dynamics of the management team and how everyone works together.

Strong supportive networks can improve well-being by providing mutually respectful relationships between Governors and their Deputies and with Area Managers and with other Governors. Such supportive networks can also help to ameliorate problems resulting from heavy workloads and work-life balance, initially through recognising that these exist and should be addressed.

## **Second self interview**

### **In what ways was this Ph.D. different from what you expected it to be?**

In a lot of ways really: although I stuck with some of my original ideas, for example using ideas of role and the theatrical paradigm based on the work of Burke and Goffman new ideas were introduced that I simply was not aware of at the beginning of the research. Examples of these are Brun and Cooper's 'missing pieces' model which I have used as a way of looking at well-being of Prison Governors and Kempster's model of leadership learning which I have applied in looking at issues around training and professional development. I found this one of the more exciting aspects of doing the research: that you find new things that seem relevant and interesting and exciting. Perhaps most importantly, when I began I had no vision of presenting the research in the way that I have or of using the method that I have of trying to understand the material that came out of my interviews and conversations with Governors. I think it's good to be willing to move away from your original plans if you can do so without entirely losing sight of them and improve your work and I hope I have achieved that here.

### **What do you think you have achieved?**

I think I've developed my understanding of the working lives of Prison Governors and something of what it is like to do that job, the demands it places on Governors and the stresses and frustrations they feel as well as the things they enjoy and that make the job worthwhile for them. I hope that I have managed to communicate some of this in my writing. I think on the whole I developed good, positive relationships with the Governors who took part in the study and I know that some of them felt their meetings with me were useful – I didn't get the feeling anyone thought I was wasting their time.

I think I have added to the existing body of work that looks at Prison Governors and I feel that my study complements some of the work that has already been done and is currently in progress. In particular I am one of the first 'outsiders' to study Governors and to do so from a social science

perspective. I also think my varied academic provenance has enriched the research as has my drawing on material from different disciplines in carrying out my research. I've been able to make some recommendations relating to the three strands of my thesis which I write about in the introduction: the experience of a Ph.D. researcher, methodology, and the working lives of Prison Governors.

I also feel that the self-interview technique I have used is a helpful means of reflection because I set a time for myself, wrote out a list of questions and just answered them, rather than rehearsing my thoughts and then editing and refining what I had written, so that if I was tired – as I am now – I had to answer the questions while tired and, like the Governors in the study I can't go back and polish things up or change what I have said. I treat this material the same way I did the meetings I had with Governors. Listening to the playback when I come to check what the software has written I know it is going to be full of long pauses and hesitancy.

### **What questions remain unanswered?**

There are a few areas which were covered in the interviews and conversations which I have not covered in the thesis. One important one is issues around diversity, particularly gender and race but also age. I have touched on some of these but have not examined them as fully as I might have because it would have been very difficult to have preserved anonymity to the extent which I have if I had written a more in depth consideration of these and quoted extensively from what the Governors said. However it is clear that these remain important issues despite policies to equalize opportunity, and that Governors in the study were affected by discriminatory attitudes during their careers even though the Prison Service is now attempting to eliminate discriminatory practice.

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these and quoted extensively from what the Governors said. However it is clear that these remain important issues despite policies to equalize opportunity, and that Governors in the study were affected by discriminatory attitudes during their careers even though the Prison Service is now attempting to eliminate discriminatory practice.

Attitudes can persist in an organisation in spite of the best intentions of the official line and the negative effects of discrimination can continue to affect individual Governors even when the Prison Service believes that as an organisation it is successfully working towards the elimination of discriminatory attitudes.

On occasions I have identified unasked questions. I think this could be used more as a strategy in research to point to things that could be looked at in subsequent projects, or, if time allowed, I could have gone back to them and discussed them with this group. These include factors affecting the degree of autonomy that Governors are given or take. Does it matter if there is not constant improvement in a prison? Not that I am promoting stagnation but that sometimes you need to reflect on things and just stand still for a little while before deciding where to go next. I got the feeling that the expectation was for constant movement and I don't think that's a good thing, either personally or organisationally. Perhaps especially when you are working in a situation where the service you are providing is, effectively a temporary 'home' for prisoners. In an area where there has already been so little research many questions are as yet unasked and unanswered.

### **What else could be done? And how?**

I think there's a great deal more; in some ways Governors can represent others who hold senior leadership and managerial offices and the research that I have done here can extend to those others. I think future research could build on what I have done, perhaps taking parts of it and expanding them or applying it to other groups of workers. I also think the methodology could be developed in particular by developing its creative and performative aspects which might make it more engaging and more readily understandable than it is as simply written text. I think that Brun and

Cooper's model in particular provides a useful framework for looking at well-being which, to me, seems to have been neglected somewhat in employees at higher levels. Similarly I found Kempster's model of leadership learning helpful in framing thoughts about leadership learning and professional development.

### **What key points can you draw?**

Well the things that have come across me most strongly are issues around workload, around feeling appreciated and respected, of autonomy both in how Governors work and of their career development and progression. And support which seems at times rather patchy – of course this reflects my own areas of interest and another person might pick out different things. I think this links to the well-being factor and there is perhaps an assumption that when people get to a certain level they don't need so much support and appreciation but I don't think the need for that goes away and it's in the interests of the Prison Service to make sure that Governors do feel that they are respected and valued. It's important to show trust and to acknowledge the skills and experience that Governors have while not overloading or over-stressing them. I also think that where targets are used their purpose should be clear and justifiable.

### **What did you leave out?**

Well, as I say I didn't write about diversity as a separate issue although there are some mentions in the material I have presented and the Prison Service is still clearly principally a white male enclave. I think I have covered the main issues that the Governors raised and I've been able to present differing viewpoints and I think that by presenting them in the way that I have I have strengthened the Governor's voices.

Another area that I did not cover was the possible effect of budget cuts on the service. Governors had already been required to introduce changes to regime which affected prisoner's activities and association time. Some Governors felt that due to particular circumstances in their prisons they were, to some extent, cushioned from the cuts, at least initially. A number expressed concern that over the three year period that these cuts covered there were going to be difficult decisions to be made as to where savings

could be made and that they were unwilling to lower the standard of care and facilities for prisoners. For them this was a moral issue, that efficiency should not have a negative impact on the care of prisoners or the morale of staff. There was concern that budget cuts might lead to unrest in some prisons.

[This section was recorded after my viva, with notes.] At my viva I was asked to write a section about gender dynamics with regard to role identity. I am hesitant about doing this, partly for reasons discussed earlier and partly because I do not wish to privilege gender above other issues relating to diversity. However, in a fairly general vein it is, as I have stated, clear that gender remains an issue within the Prison Service. The majority of Governors are male, when I started my research I calculated from the Prison Service website, the male:female ratio of Governing Governors as approximately 7:1. In August 2010 from the same source there were 92 male Governors and 32 female giving an approximate ratio of 3:1. This suggests a move away from Bryans' characterisation of the typical Governing Governor as a middle-aged white male, but there is still a way to go before the situation becomes equitable. Looking at more senior management levels, of eight Directors of Offender Management five are men and three are women, and the Functional Operations Director and Director of Offender Management for Wales is also a woman.

The Prison Service espouses principles of equality; Prison Service Order 8005 (2001) states "The overarching principle of the Prison Service is that all posts are open to both men and women" and advocates positive action, quoting from recruitment order 8100 that "...steps should be taken to encourage applications from groups which are under-represented." However this organisational commitment may not always apply to the careers of individual Governors as they progress through their careers. In the same way, the aggregate data from the Prison Service website does not reflect individual experiences.

Information about other possible issues around diversity is not so readily available; indeed the information I have given on gender is not reliable due to variations in the accuracy of information available on the Prison Service

website. One female Governor was apparently governing two prisons a considerable distance apart. When I started my research there were two Governing Governors from ethnic minority backgrounds. Both of these are, apparently, still in post but I have no way of knowing without making enquiries beyond those permitted by my authorization from the Prison Service whether any more Governors from non-dominant ethnic backgrounds have taken up post, nor can I obtain information about age, disability or sexual orientation.

### **How have you developed as a researcher?**

I think I've become more confident, when I started I wanted to produce something that looked like a Ph.D. and was essentially rather formulaic and although I thought I would enjoy the research I thought the writing might get to be a chore. But gradually I developed my own viewpoints and ideas and the confidence to work with them with the support of my supervisors and the interest of the Governors who took part in the study and I've enjoyed doing it. When I started I knew nothing really about using the performative material or imaginative writing in research and I think this is a fascinating area. I have looked at different ways of writing and of trying to present material in an interesting and engaging manner and also acknowledging my own presence as a researcher and the effect that this has on the research that I do. I've also developed an awareness of how blurry the boundaries can be between 'academic' research and creative writing.

My experience parallels that of the Governors in that I knew a bit about research and I had done some small pieces but this is the first that feels like I am doing it for real, and I'm much more aware of how complex it is and of the possibilities and choices that you have.

### **How do you feel about what you've done?**

I'm content with it; I see it as a beginning and something that contributes to areas of research that will hopefully develop both in the subject matter, whether Governors in particular or people working in comparable roles, and in the methodology, the performative aspects and trying to bring voices together and give them a strength without losing their individuality by aggregating them. I've come further than I set out to do and I've

encountered a lot of new things which I have been able to make use of. I think I have presented the words and viewpoints of the Prison Governors without distortion although I have manipulated them. This is particularly so for those I met with the most and was able to develop some kind of relationship with, although I felt that everyone was quite open and relaxed in talking with me from the beginning. I think what I have done respects the people who were kind enough to give me their time and share their knowledge and experience. And I think that the conclusions I draw are useful and that over all the research adds to work already done looking at Prison Governors and at others who fill senior managerial and leadership roles.

## **Summary and Conclusions**

In summarising my research and drawing conclusions I return to the three stranded structure of my thesis which I set out in the introduction. I start by looking at the research itself, initially by considering my original research questions and then by looking at the scenes and soliloquies that I have drawn from my meetings with Governors. I then move on to methodology and finally to my experiences as a Ph.D. student.

### **Research questions**

*What tensions or conflicts arise within the role of Prison Governors from the fact that imprisonment is a contentious issue politically, socially, culturally and morally?*

Several of the Governors make moral and ethical points that relate to political issues. John in particular in his soliloquy links politics with the morality of governing in the area of budget restraints and the service provided to prisoners. He suggests that Governors may need to take a 'political stance' and 'have to say what's right' to prevent damage to the service they are able to provide to prisoners. The issue of budget cuts which were announced during the course of the study was of concern to the Governors who felt that while they could absorb some level of cuts, and some had temporary protection due to particular circumstances within the prison, there would be a negative impact on some prisoners and this could potentially lead to discontent and possible disturbances or raised levels of self injury in vulnerable prisoners.

Disturbances in prisons can be very expensive to deal with and a desire for ongoing savings has to be weighed against an increased risk of problems arising. Disturbances, as well as suicide and self harm will also bring negative publicity which is politically damaging. Samuel raises a second issue where politics and morality collide when he criticises sentencing practices that see learning-disabled and severely mentally ill people sent to prison. This is an issue that stretches wider than just the Prison Service as Samuel acknowledges. It is difficult to find suitable provision for people with complex needs and prisons seem to have become the virtual safety net

despite acknowledgement that prison is not appropriate for people with mental health needs.

Rebecca raises a wider ethical issue when she comments that she is, in fact, opposed to imprisonment. Should one go and work within the system one disapproves off to try to effect change or should one remain an external objector?

Governors also raise the fact that imprisonment is a political issue and that penal practices reflect both underlying political values and short-term pragmatic responses to actual or perceived populist demand. This also been seen during the New Labour administrations with such strategies as the continued focus on antisocial behavior.

*What tensions or conflicts arise within the role of Prison Governors from the apparent contradiction between the degree of autonomy they can exercise in certain areas (e.g. contracting out, early release) and the high degree of prescription laid down in certain areas by the requirement to meet managerial targets?*

Some Governors expressed frustration with the amount of control imposed by Headquarters. There seem to be varying levels of autonomy available to Governors. The perception of levels of autonomy is of course linked to the expectation of autonomy that Governors bring to the job. Several of the Governors felt that a lack of consultation and freedom of interpretation reflected a lack of trust in their judgment and of respect for their skills and abilities. Joshua in particular draws attention to the number of targets and initiatives Governors are expected to work to, suggesting that these are overly complex. Some Governors also felt that a focus on measurable aspects of the management of prisons leads to a neglect of 'softer' aspects of provision, such as qualities of relationships which are essential for maintaining order and security. Governors feel they can be vulnerable if something goes wrong, particularly if it is seen as reflecting badly on politicians. They feel that they are likely to be first to go. Thus the need for political 'nous' which is described by Bryans and Wilson (2000).

*What tensions or conflicts arise from the conflicting, or potentially conflicting purposes ascribed to imprisonment, e.g. security and rehabilitation? How are these affected by factors such as overcrowding?*

Prisons fulfill a number of functions and, as shown in the discussion on the development of imprisonment and penal policy, these are linked to social and moral values and have been and remain open to change and discussion. The basic role of prisons is to keep people who have been sentenced by the courts in conditions appropriate to the level of security deemed necessary.

As Samuel suggested this can have damaging effects on some prisoners who have particular needs such as mental health, disability related or cultural requirements that can be difficult to meet within a prison environment. Ruth added the problem of population to this when she described how this could affect the young men in her care. The prison tried to offer both work and leisure opportunities to the young men but population pressure meant they might be moved to other facilities which offered different, or poorer, opportunities. She gave examples of prisoners who could not work on areas of the prison campus that required her to grant them release on temporary license (ROTL) because once they had successfully completed a license there would be pressure to move them to open conditions. Although this might be good in itself it damaged work experience and training opportunities.

Similarly prisoners were reluctant to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme because they knew that they were likely to be moved and be unable to complete the award. This type of problem suggests a need to look at provision across the Service and at the individual needs of prisoners to ensure that positive and useful experiences are not denied or lost due to the demands of housing prisoners in a system operating at capacity.

High prisoner numbers can also have a negative impact on decency. Prisons may be obliged to house two or even three prisoners in cells originally designed for one, and there have been a number of occasions when lack of space in prisons has led to the use of police cells to house prisoners. This

practice is unsatisfactory from the perspective of decency and very expensive for the Prison Service.

*Prisons are dynamic environments set within a wider dynamic context of business and political development and change. How do Governors respond to and manage change?*

Change is a major factor in the working lives of Governors. Some of the Governors in the study were appointed with the express purpose of effecting change in prisons that were deemed to have problems. This applies to Ruth and Samuel. Governors also brought their own ideas and personalities and attitudes with them and looked for ways to make changes that would benefit prisoners and the prison.

There is also a cultural expectation of change. Joshua talks about the number of change initiatives in the Service, suggesting that it might be wiser to focus on a few of these. There is, as I have commented before, a consistent drive for and expectation of improvement within the Service. While I would in no way wish to denigrate this or suggest that it is not a laudable aim it does seem that the need to take stock and reflect maybe neglected by this impetus.

Governors also work in an ethos of career change. Few Governors stay in the same place more than two or three years and they feel pressure may be placed on them to move jobs and to take certain jobs because of this. This affects their ability to make positive changes because they may move before these have truly become part of the culture of an establishment.

Governors are also affected by political change and several of them expressed frustration at their vulnerability to this and at what they described as short-termism.

The management of change links to ideas of autonomy. Prisons are diverse entities which operate within a single organisation. Thus organisation-wide change would impinge on different prisons in different ways. Governors need to be able to negotiate change and to be accorded respect for their knowledge, experience and judgment in decisions as to whether particular policies are appropriate to their prison and how best to implement them.

*What training and support do Governors feel they need?*

Governors have varying experience of training for governorship. John stresses the need for preparation for promotion and this is echoed by Joshua when he speaks of promotion to the level of incompetence (this also relates to change as I have just discussed). Governors generally reacted positively to developments in opportunities for continued professional development although there were some reservations about the time away from prison these would entail for Governors who had to travel long distances. More provision of short, regionally based seminars and workshops geared to the needs and interests of participants possibly timed to take place around area meetings could help to alleviate this difficulty.

Reactions to the Optimising Potential exercise were mixed. Governors mostly saw it as useful but Rachel felt it was an expensive waste of time that she had learned nothing from. Joshua also suggests that there was a failure to recognise that Governors might have thought about their own potential within and beyond the prison service independently of this exercise. The section of this thesis which deals with issues around staying in post and moving on demonstrates that Governors give considerable thought to this. As an exercise Optimising Potential can be interesting and useful, but as Joshua in particular points out it needs to be approached with sensitivity and is only one part of career and personal development.

Those Governors who had mentors felt they were useful both for their knowledge and experience and the support they could offer. Some Governors expressed feelings of isolation and that there was no one they could easily 'sound off' to. For some peers and colleagues fulfill this role, while all stressed the importance of an open and trusting relationship with a Deputy who felt able to question and criticise. Line managers are also seen as potential sources of support although Governors report mixed experiences of this and there is some feeling that under the reorganisation of the National Offender Management Service and the appointments of regional Directors of Offender Management Services Governors may find themselves being managed by people who, initially at least, lack experience of and insights into prison environments.

*How is full accountability assured within closed institutions where confidentiality must be ensured?*

Issues of accountability were not discussed as fully as I had originally envisaged. This is an aspect of the work that changed from my original idea. Governors are very much aware of their accountability and this operates at several levels. It affects relationships with stakeholders including prisoners, families, staff and partner organisations as well as multiple levels of management within the Prison Service and political overseers within government as well as the public and media. Despite the increasing openness John speaks of which is expressed in allowing Governors to speak more on issues and in the publication of reports by her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons, the availability of prison related documents and reports and the presence of Independent Monitoring Boards, Prison Visitors and other non-staff individuals prisons remain by their nature largely closed institutions. This is as it should be, prisoners may have been sentenced to deprivation of liberty but they are still entitled to respect of their privacy and the maintenance of confidentiality. This means that Governors and the Prison Service as a whole to have to walk a fine line between accountability and the maintenance of confidentiality and respect for the rights of prisoners and staff.

*How do Prison Governors characterise their professional identities and moralities? Do these conflict with their personal identities and moralities?*

To some extent this has been considered in my discussion of question one. The Governors expressed their commitment to public service and to working within that ethos. As seen in the responses to question one there were some areas where they felt that personal morality was or could be challenged. I asked Matthew whether he did feel that his personal morality is challenged by the culture and morality of the prison service and he replied that this was not a problem for him – but he would not characterise himself as amoral!

This is an area that could benefit from more research which could be linked to moral and ethical factors relating to imprisonment and the motivation

that brings people to work in the prison service and keeps them there (see Liebling and Arnold, 2004).

Reflecting back over these questions which were originally drawn up as part of my application to the ESRC I can see that some of them have not really been answered by the research. There are two main reasons for this. The first is that I was probably suggesting the wrong questions in my original proposal – I had to have some research questions, but I did not know enough to frame suitable ones. The second is that for research like mine developing research questions well in advance of the project is not appropriate. What I have tried to do is encourage Governors to tell me about what is important to them, so although I did ask questions and suggest topics at times I did not try to keep Governors to a particular format seeking answers to particular questions. This can be a problem for Ph.D. researchers whose research, while of value and fulfilling the requirements for a Ph.D. does not fit the pattern for applications that seems to be expected by funding bodies.

### **Themes arising from the meetings with Governors**

Certain themes emerge from the interview and conversational material we created. Most of these are presented in the scenes and soliloquies and the reflections and commentaries that follow them. Some of the aspects of governorship I have looked at were part of my initial concept while others arose as Governors spoke to me. I have presented nine scenes each focusing on aspects which appear to be important to a number of Governors or represent common experience which although Governor share them in common differ in the manner of experience and the Governor's reactions to them. These are:

*Joining the Prison Service*, and motivations for and contexts in which Governors originally joined. Their aspirations and expectations. Unsurprisingly this produced a mixed bag of responses reflecting the wide range of backgrounds that Governors came from and the varying career paths they had followed to reach their current positions.

*Training and development:* What training and continuing professional development have Governors received prior to and since taking up posts as Governing Governors? How far does this meet their needs and how do they rate the quality of provision? Again responses to these were mixed though overall I got the impression that Governors felt that training for promotion was inadequate. There have been recent improvements in opportunities for continuing professional development and Governors appreciate these although some felt limited in their ability to take advantage of them. The Optimising Potential exercise received mixed responses ranging from regarding it as useless to feeling that it had been worthwhile.

*Becoming a Governing Governor.* This focuses on the experience of becoming a Governor and how Governors have reacted to this and how it relates to their expectations. It links to questions of training and development, in particular preparation for promotion, and to support for Governors. Need for this is greatest when Governors are newly promoted or when they have to deal with traumatic incidents. The fact that Governors feel the need to wear the ‘mask of competence’ means that line managers in particular need to be sensitive to support needs which Governors may not wish to express openly.

*Time management.* As I have previously said Governors work long hours and have to juggle competing demands inside and outside the prison. This scene focuses on typical days although all Governors stressed that unexpected things can and often do happen so that while they may have a basic structure to their days this is often not how things turn out. Working such long hours can be detrimental to health and to Governors’ lives and relationships outside the prison. Research could usefully look at this, particularly using comparative methods to learn from countries where there is less of a ‘long hours’ culture to see whether, and how, prisons can be effectively and efficiently lead and managed without placing such heavy demands on staff.

*Autonomy and accountability.* This scene looks at how much autonomy Governors feel they have in fulfilling their role within the Prison Service

and at the measures, particularly those relating to quantifiable aspects of performance, which are used as part of ensuring accountability.

Levels of autonomy are variable; some Governors reported having more control over staff recruitment and appointments for example, as discussed in the support scene over the appointment of their Deputy. There are different reported levels of autonomy in decisions relating to policy and its implementation. This is a potentially interesting and useful area for further research. What factors affect the degree of autonomy Governors are able to exercise? How does this relate to the expectations of Governors and others? Additionally more work could be undertaken on accountability, the mechanisms which exist to ensure this, how they interact and how effective they are.

*National Offender Management Service and Ministry of Justice.* This scene looks at two major reorganisations that took place during the research, the splitting of the Home Office and creation of the Ministry of Justice and the relaunch of the National Offender Management Service. Perhaps surprisingly most Governors perceive these as having little effect on prisons although some expressed the hope that the Ministry of Justice would improve both the quantity and the quality of attention prisons receive at ministerial level. Governors tended to be ambivalent about the National Offender Management Service. Having experienced it for some years as an irritating irrelevance, they tended towards skepticism of its new role as a commissioning body suggesting that the realities of service provision would limit scope for this. The National Offender Management Service was seen as a good idea poorly executed and doubt was expressed as to its ability to recover from a poor start to become a useful factor in service management and delivery rather than merely another bureaucratic level. Research could usefully examine this as well as any effect on the Prison Service of the creation of the Ministry of Justice.

*Prison Officers' strike.* This scene principally concentrates on the experiences of Joshua and Matthew who both spoke at some length about the Prison Officers Association strike of August 29th 2007. Additional material from unrecorded meetings with Luke and Rachel is also used. Both

Joshua and Matthew point to the difficulties in managing such a day. For Matthew, as for Luke and Rachel, the day was pared down to the maintenance of security and the provision of minimal essential services. Matthew also tried to provide some extras as compensation. Joshua faced a different situation; prisoners expected to go out and meet work obligations and would have been unlikely to tolerate restrictions on their movements of the level experienced by prisoners in other jails.

This event highlights the roles of negotiation and prisoner compliance and the distance between local and national industrial relations. Matthew spoke for most of the Governors when he described these as locally good and nationally dire.

Interestingly, a problem relating to industrial relations which Samuel raised was that of having weak local Prison Officers' Association representation. This makes it difficult for Governors to negotiate with staff representatives on issues affecting the prison.

There is considerable scope for further research into the complex issues of Prison Service industrial relations. Perhaps taking a developmental/historical perspective to try to analyse issues within industrial relations and combining this with a comparative element looking at prison administrations in other countries and industrial relations in other areas, particularly where improvements have been made.

*How long to run?* This scene looks at how long Governors hope to and anticipate staying in post and factors which can affect this. There is a culture of change within the Prison Service which affects this and Governors are expected to seek to move on after 2–3 years. This can lead to lack of stability for establishments which has to be weighed against Governors' own wishes for career advancement. Governors identified a number of factors which can affect this including the needs of family, sustaining interest and motivation for a particular job, and cultural pressure. Governors point to the need to see changes and developments through and to provide some stability for both prisoners and staff. Some of the Governors also comment on the need to be proactive to ensure that they are

not effectively coerced into taking positions but can retain control over their careers.

Younger Governors have particular needs when it comes to career planning as having become Governors at comparatively early ages they may not wish to simply move from prison to prison or take up roles at headquarters or in other areas of the Civil Service. There is a need to look at developing other options for capable young Governors perhaps through external secondments which could also offer training and development opportunities.

Research could usefully look at some of these issues – at the culture of change, at questions relating to career development and succession planning and the retention of able staff.

*Support.* This final scene looks at where Governors find support. Five principal areas are identified: family and friends; colleagues and peers; mentors; Area Managers and Deputies. Several of the Governors spoke of feelings of isolation, and all felt the need for honest and trusting relationships in which they could allow the ‘mask of competence’ to slip for a while. Some of the Governors commented about how much they had valued talking to me as someone who is outside the Prison Service but has some knowledge and understanding. Networks are important and it may be that the Prison Service could assist in the development of these.

As I write in my commentary I feel it is revealing that none of the Governors spoke of receiving support from management above the level of Area Manager. Perhaps this is an area the Prison Service needs to examine. Providing effective support mechanisms for Governors can benefit the Prison Service by reducing levels of damaging stress and thus helping to maintain the physical and mental well-being of this group of key employees. There is scope for research to contribute further to this by looking in greater depth at support mechanisms, and those factors which help or hinder their development and at ways of facilitating the development of support.

I had originally intended to present a scene in which Governors spoke about aspects of working in the Prison Service. However this covers a large and

diverse range of material even after I have taken some out for use in the themed scenes, so I decided to present some longer extracts from the meetings as soliloquies that focus on particular aspects of their work that individual Governors spoke about. Five of these are interspersed amongst the scenes.

#### *John's soliloquy*

John's soliloquy is wide ranging, covering a number of themes dealt with throughout the thesis. He links recruitment and training to changes in managerial practice and the new expectations of Governors associated with these, and to increased political control of the Prison Service. John also suggests an increased focus on process and that these elements in combination have lessened the autonomy of Governors.

The lessening of autonomy has resulted in a diminishing of the visionary role of Governors and John questions at what point visionaries become deviants and at what point does disagreement with policy render a Governor ineffective? These two questions can be linked to Rebecca's comments about joining the Prison Service when she is in fact opposed to locking people up. John also emphasises the need for Governors to take a moral stance, seeing them in some ways as a potential 'safety valve' against the political vicissitudes that the Prison Service can be subject to. This could provide scope for some fascinating, though difficult, research examining the moral perspectives of Governors and linking these to the exercise of autonomy and ideas of deviance and conformity within organisations.

#### *Samuel's soliloquy*

Samuel comments in the scene relating to promotion to Governing Governor that it was the change of prison rather than role that he had found difficult. His soliloquy expands on this and gives us an insight into the distress that self harm and the inappropriate imprisonment of people with severe mental health problems or learning disabilities causes him. These issues have been taken up by organisations such as the Prison Reform Trust (2007) and LDOffenders as well as by relatives of individual prisoners. One

might hope that with increased partnership working and coordinated offender management this situation might improve. Research could usefully look at practice in other countries to highlight good practice in the care of offenders with complex needs.

#### *Matthew's soliloquy*

Matthew's comments on budgeting are something of an indictment of a service that aims to be more like business in its approach to the management of resources. Matthew clearly shows how budgetary uncertainty can limit Governors' scope for planning and development and how public sector prisons can be disadvantaged and demotivated compared to private sector establishments. This is one Governor's experience and I do not have sufficient knowledge of Prison Service budget setting to place it in an organisational context but other Governors also said they experienced problems in planning due to financial uncertainty and such a short-term approach to financial planning does seem an unsatisfactory option, especially when, as Matthew relates, it can leave Governors having to make last-minute savings or expenditures to try to be as near on-budget as they can.

Matthew's suggestion that Governors within a region share budgetary information and, possibly, resources, could be one way of beginning to address this. Here research which looked at alternative methods of setting and managing budgets, taking a comparative approach with other organisations could be helpful and could aim to suggest ways to limit the kind of negative incentives Matthew speaks of.

#### *Joshua's soliloquy*

Joshua's soliloquy deals with the number and complexity of targets that Governors are expected to work towards. His words echo the selections in the previous scene, which focuses on autonomy and accountability as well as linking to ideas of conformity and deviance in regard to independent thought that John raises in his soliloquy. Joshua suggests that there are too many targets and that it would be more productive to have fewer and concentrate on those. He does say there is room for negotiation and

prioritisation by Governors, but comparative research to look at effective target setting and whether this could be improved could be useful. Governors could also be asked their opinions on which targets could be discarded without detriment to performance.

#### *Rebecca's soliloquy*

Rebecca's soliloquy looks at how the Prison Service treats, senior managers and raises several factors included in Brun and Cooper's model of well-being. In particular, work-life balance, and the closely associated issue of workload. She considers managerial style suggesting this is undergoing a generational change and, in a second meeting, she commented on an improvement in the style of her line management following the appointment of a new Area Manager, thus demonstrating the importance of individual personalities and approaches to leadership and management. Recognition as an individual is important to Rebecca as to other Governors, and this can be of particular importance during the difficult periods of adjustment to new roles. Again, this is an area in which research could link to other areas of organisational studies to help the Prison Service to retain able staff who may decide to leave because they believe other employers might provide better working conditions and a more appreciative environment. And a more reciprocal and balanced relationship as Rebecca would hope for.

## **Methodology**

### **Role and performance**

Moving on to the idea of governorship as a role in the production of a performance of imprisonment, in the title of this thesis I suggest that Governors can be characterised as actor-directors in that they both act out a part – as Governors, but also direct other players via their leadership and management roles. This perspective has provided a useful underlying framework for viewing Governors' working lives. For example, in taking on the role of Governing Governor participants were aware of a change in role and of moving into a role which existed independently of them and which they had to make their own by imprinting it with their own personalities, skills and attributes.

The concept of role, based on the ideas of Burke and Goffman, has influenced the structure of the thesis and has helped me to reflect on different aspects of the Governors' working lives. A strong dramatic image that was described at times by most of the Governors can be labelled the 'mask of competence'. The need to appear competent, confident and in control at all times. Coupled with this are the assumptions and expectations of those around the Governor, they will, as Samuel suggests, often take the view that 'you're the Governor' and assume certain levels of competence and confidence, which may not match those the Governor is actually feeling. These expectations may give space for Governors to develop into their roles as Goffman (1979) suggests, or for some they may add to the stress and challenges of their new position.

Some Governors told me stories of being taken too seriously by staff who reacted to off-the-cuff remarks or Governors' musings as though they were statements of intent or instruction. For example Mark related an instance where he had commented that a corridor needed painting, perhaps in green. He had gone on leave and come back to find this had been done and looked horrible! What had been at most a notion had been misread as an instruction.

Moving into the role of Governing Governor involves a major change in staging of roles. Deputy Governors are focused internally; as we have seen

they take a principal role in the daily running of the prison and fulfill a principally managerial role making sure that things get done. Governing Governors, while retaining an internal prison-based role, move into a directorial leadership role, motivating and coordinating according to a strategic vision of development, as well as taking an external role involving liaison and negotiation with partner organisations as they become both actors and directors.

#### **Kempster's model of leadership learning**

Kempster's view of leadership learning is supported by the Governors' comments. All say they have learned by observation, seeing how other Governing Governors have worked and whether this is effective or not. These experiences have been 'filed away' to be drawn on as needed. Some of the Governors mention particular individuals as having been important in their development as leaders. Kempster also suggests that leadership is learnt by doing. A number of Governors spoke of the range of roles they had experienced during their careers. Periods as acting Governor seem to be of particular value in developing leadership skills and in increasing Governors' confidence in taking on a new role. This can also give an early opportunity for reflection which Kempster views as another important aspect of leadership learning. Feedback on performance is also important.

Kempster suggests that effective leaders both aspire to and identify with leadership – they want to be leaders and they see themselves in that role. Most of the Governors in the study joined with the clear aim of taking on leadership roles or developed that aim early in their careers.

Kempster's ideas link well with those of role performance that pervade this thesis. Leaders learn through observation and experience. In performative terms Governors have had opportunities to critically observe others in the role and to assess the strengths and weaknesses of their performances. This raises the unanswered question as to when did they start to do this? Those who joined in expectation of becoming Governing Governors may have done so from the start of their careers. Others may not have done so until governorship became a real possibility for them, unless something

particular lead to an ad hoc assessment or they were formally asked to give an opinion.

Kempster's view of leadership learning fits well with the dramaturgical approach that underlies the study. He emphasises observational and particularly experiential learning of leadership by acting as a leader, as well as the idea of thinking oneself into a role which relates to the expectations and assumptions of those who hold a role and those around them.

Further research could study the mechanisms of leadership learning within the Prison Service, drawing on work and experience from other employment sectors and types of business.

#### **Brun and Cooper's missing pieces model of employee well-being**

Brun and Cooper's missing pieces model of employee well-being has provided a simple and effective framework for considering the well-being of Governing Governors. It can be easy to forget that the 'Number One' Governor is still an employee as well as a leader and senior manager and that consideration needs to be given to ensuring their well-being. It is in the interests of the Prison Service to do this for this key group of staff.

A number of issues relating to Brun and Cooper's well-being model have been raised by this research. For example both Rebecca and Joshua spoke about recognition at work, that there needs to be acknowledgement of the skills and judgement of Governors, of how hard they work and the complex and difficult nature of their jobs. Additionally special note should be taken of extraordinary events such as the POA strike and recognition and appreciation shown to the Governors for effective leadership on such occasions.

The second item in Brun and Cooper's model is social support. Most of the Governors in the study felt they had developed good support networks amongst colleagues during the course of their careers. However, some suggested that repeated moves have made this more difficult. This is an area regional managers might look at developing and more research into types of support available to Governors and the usefulness and

effectiveness of these could be helpful. Comparative studies of other areas of business organisation could add to this.

A number of Governors expressed views that suggested that they did not always feel respected at work. No one suggested the staff within the prison did not respect them, although the likelihood that a Governing Governor might only be in a post for a relatively short time could lead staff to take them less seriously than they might on the basis that they would soon be replaced by a new incumbent, with a new set of ideas. Perceived lack of respect from people further up the prison service hierarchy seems to be more of a problem. Key figures in this are Directors of Offender Management (who replaced Area Managers under reorganisation) of whom Governors report varying experiences. There is also a need for training and continuing professional development to demonstrate respect for Governors; this seems to be developing in that these are becoming more geared to individual need. A last area the Prison Service could look at is the idea of promotion to the level of incompetence, which is raised by both John and Joshua. This practice is disrespectful, uncaring and damaging. Further research could help to deepen understanding of the importance of the sense of respect to Governor's well-being and how best to maximise it to the benefit of Governors and the Prison Service as a whole.

Work-life balance can prove problematic to Governors, as to anyone who routinely works long hours. Long hours can be compounded by the stress of the Governors' role and this can be particularly important during the early months after promotion as both Ruth and Rebecca have found. Some Governors may need more support than others during this time and more senior managers need to be aware of this and to be sensitive in their approach to helping Governors adjust to their new roles. It might be that there are some aspects of the Governors' role that can be delegated; also an attempt to cut down the amount of correspondence Governors have to look at by, for example, more effective targeting could help this. However Governors report a sense of ownership of, and responsibility for, their prison and it might be difficult to persuade them to cut down their hours,

especially as they will have been inculcated into a long hours culture during their careers.

Research could look more closely at Governors' working lives, perhaps using an ethnographic approach. Care would have to be taken to ensure that this was perceived as non-threatening. The use of independent researchers external to the prison service could help this. As well as enhancing work-life balance this could consider workload which appears to be heavy and demanding for Governors as it is for others in comparable positions in other areas of the public, private and voluntary sectors. There is scope for research across sectors and for the sharing of ideas and good practice.

Involvement in decision-making is the sixth of Brun and Cooper's missing pieces. Governors' perceptions of this were varied and, as suggested earlier, may be linked to their expectations. However, most reported that, at times, they felt both policy and implementation were imposed in a manner that was sub optimal, if not inappropriate to the particular conditions at the prison. Some Governors, such as Joshua, link this to a perceived lack of trust in Governors by Headquarters management, which links to respect and appreciation. Research could look at factors affecting Governors' autonomy and means of enhancing it to best effect.

There are elements in the role of Governors that can lead to role conflict and role ambiguity. Samuel raises one of these when he looks at sentencing practice. Rebecca raises the issue of working within an organisation that functions against one's personal beliefs. For most of the Governors in this study this would preclude working in private-sector prisons. Budget cuts that could negatively affect the lives of prisoners are a source of concern to Governors who saw the maintenance of standards of care to both prisoners and staff as an important part of their role. Governors do not in general seem to experience role conflict or ambiguity arising from the different aspects of their role, for example providing security is not only about preventing escapes but is also concerned with providing a safe and secure environment (this is an area which is considered in the Measuring the Quality of Prison Life questionnaire (Liebling and Arnold, 2002)), which is necessary for (re) habilitation to work. Liebling, together with Arnold,

(2004) has considered aspects of the moral performance of prisons, and this work could be developed with a focus on Governing Governors and on the well-being of Governors, as moral dissonance would seem likely to have a negative effect on this and on the performance of Governors.

A second role ambiguity that may affect Governors arises from fluctuating attitudes to and changes in definition of the role of prisons within society. Earlier I considered the change from a treatment model to a justice model and we have also seen how emphasis has shifted around between, for example, rehabilitative and punitive aspects of imprisonment. Uncertainty as to the social function of imprisonment, often associated with political pragmatism and politicians' need for popular support and resulting in sudden policy changes, can have a detrimental effect on the well-being of Governors who are acting roles where the script is likely to change without notice.

#### **Practical aspects of methodology**

Coming now to some of the practical aspects of methodology: the way I carried out the interviews did allow me to establish relationships with the Governors and to carry issues between Governors, to look at things over time and to pick up on things which occurred during the course of the research such as reorganisation within the Prison Service and the prison officers' strike. Also this more leisurely pace gave more room to talk rather than feeling we had to get through a busy interview schedule.

Possibly, the latitudinal aspect of the interview method was of more benefit to this research than the longitudinal. This could be enhanced with research over a longer period although one would need to ensure that it did not become overly intrusive and that the research remains purposeful and does not just exist for its own sake.

My self interviews gave room for some reflection and also some insight into the experience of being interviewed. They also allowed me some opportunity to rehearse being asked questions about my thesis.

The scenes and soliloquies did work as a way of presenting the material I collected and foregrounded what the Governors had to say. This gives

strength to the Governors' voices and allows readers to form their own opinions before reading what I had to say, thus improving opportunities for debate.

The syntheses helped in engaging with the material, in marshalling my thoughts and in reflection. I think that this kind of imaginative writing/role-play is definitely useful as a way of engaging with data and strengthening the relationships that have formed during the period of research. It also serves as a reminder of the somewhat intrusive role of researcher in mediating between research participants and the audience to the research.

Future research in social sciences could develop these creative aspects of interaction with data, as well as the performative aspects, which I have only begun to explore and which others are already taking much further.

As I detail earlier the treatment of ethics for this thesis was somewhat perfunctory as Governors were not seen to be a vulnerable group of participants. However, I feel after doing this research that this should be reconsidered. The Governors in the study were very open in their dealings with me. They expressed views that might mark them out as 'dissident' within the service. Occupying a position of relatively high status within the hierarchy of an organisation does not lessen an individual's vulnerability within a research situation, indeed for a comparatively small group such as Governing Governors it can add to it.

This issue of ethics and the possible vulnerability of individuals in positions of relative power and autonomy needs to be discussed further and reviewed by individual researchers and those who set research guidelines. It is also raised as an issue for Governors in earlier research discussed in this thesis. Shane Bryans (2005) in particular points to the role of Governors in protecting political figures and as being personally vulnerable. This is mentioned by Samuel and relates to knowledge that Governors possess that could harm those who exercise political and managerial control and also as 'secret knowledge' (Andrew Sparkes, in conversation, 2010) put Governors in a vulnerable position both professionally and within the context of this project. Thus I have emphasised confidentiality and the fact that

maintaining confidentiality can preclude the discussion of certain issues as, within a study based around a small group this could compromise the anonymity of Governors making them vulnerable, not only within the Prison Service if they have been critical or to use John's term, deviant, but also to external pressure such as from the press and other media searching for stories to further their own agenda.

### **My experience as a Ph.D. student**

I think that my experiences and my role in the research as a Ph.D. student come through in the thesis. Part of this has been a willingness to change and adapt to new materials and ideas that I encountered during the course of the project; this is often difficult in real-world research, because of such things as time, financial, or commissioning restraints. I was fortunate to have the chance to do this research in the way that I did and to explore its possibilities. During this research I have developed my confidence and my interview skills, explored different methods of working with interview and conversational material and ways of writing. I began to find my own voice and to use it effectively. I have become more aware of research as a creative process and of the illusory nature of boundaries between research and creativity. I have drawn on a number of disciplines in this project – social policy, criminology, social psychology, organisational studies and literature as well as occasionally using images from needlework to clarify and present my thoughts. Courses in research methodology could include more on this type of research to develop the skills of researchers and widen the scope of research undertaken. This is of particular importance at post-graduate level which gives many researchers opportunities to explore possibilities that may not be readily available to them in their future careers.

The relationships I formed with the Governors who participated were of tremendous importance to the research, and in addition to the respect with which I approached them and which deepened over the course of the research I came to care about them and to enjoy their company.

## **Contributions of this work**

This research builds on and complements earlier research and commentary about prison Governing and the experience of Prison Governors. In particular it is the first research study that has taken a longitudinal approach, allowing me to take account of Governors' increased experience and development within their roles. In addition to this the use of repeat interviews over an extended period has enabled me to ask Governors to comment on issues their colleagues have raised, or to react to things that have arisen during the course of the research such as budget cuts, Governmental and NOMS reorganisation and the Prison Officers' strike.

I have combined a number of theoretical approaches in a novel way that allows each to benefit from the strengths of the others. Goffman's well-established work on role performance, the presentation of self and the management and maintenance of identity forms a basis on which I then apply the more recent work of Brun and Cooper on well-being and Kempster on leadership learning to create a coherent and usable framework for the analysis and understanding of the conversational material.

In order to emphasise the concept of research itself being a performance I present material in ways analogous to performance scripts. Working with a reflexive frame I make my performance within the research apparent and reflect on my position and development as a researcher and the effect this has on the research. I also use novel approaches of self-interview and imaginative role play writing to assist my engagement with the role of the Governors and their experiences as Governors as related to me and as participants in this work.

Throughout my summary and conclusions I make a number of suggestions for future research, relating specifically to Governing Governors and in the wider context of organisational sociology/psychology of work. I focus particularly on ways of enhancing the well-being of Governors and the benefits that could accrue from this.

I also comment on and make some suggestions regarding the requirements of research at Ph.D. level, particularly when one is working under the

auspices of a funding body, and the ways these may place constraints on the research.

### **Judgement Criteria**

Several authors have looked at how academic criteria are used to evaluate and judge work that is carried out and, as this work is, resented in non-conventional ways. Nicholas Holt (2003) comments on how autoethnography challenges 'accepted views about silent authorship'. Holt points to a 'crisis of legitimation' which questions the traditional criteria such as validity, reliability and objectivity used in evaluating research. Drawing on work by Andrew Sparkes, Holt examines his own experiences as an academic author going through the peer review process as a basis for a discussion of the evaluation and judgement of autoethnography and presents it as discourses involving reviewers and himself. He discusses the helplessness he felt in the face of demands for traditional verification criteria.

Holt also draws on the work of Laurel Richardson. She presents five factors for use when assessing personal narrative (2000). These are: making a substantive contribution, aesthetic merit, reflexivity, impactfulness and expressing a reality. These criteria can usefully be applied to the work presented here. In an earlier paper Richardson (1997) discusses 'de-disciplining' her academic life. This relates back to my earlier discussion of reflexivity and Lacan's idea of researcher resistance. Not only researchers may be resistant to ideas that fall outside their research zone and world view, so also may reviewers and assessors.

Andrew Sparkes (2000) presents his experience of peer review and the move away from silent authorship to an acknowledged authorial presence. He quotes from the reviews he received for a paper and examines these in depth relating them to both his role as an academic author and as a reviewer of the work of other writers.

Work that makes use of performance or other arts-based means of representation such as Maggie O'Neill's work on prostitution in Walsall (<http://www.safetysoapbox.co.uk/gallery2.htm>) may appear to some to

stray away from scholarly social science and may, as Kip Jones suggests in his blog (2010) deliver neither good social science nor good art (see also Saldana, 2003). However, different styles of presentation do not necessarily indicate a lack of rigour and can make work more accessible and meaningful than traditional scholarly prose allows. Criteria used to judge social science which has more overtly creative elements – surely all research is creative to some extent, otherwise it would not deliver anything new? – can be, however, essentially the same as those used for more conventionally executed and presented research. Thus the questions to ask would be:

- 1) Are the questions which underlie the work justified by their usefulness, interest, potential applications?
- 2) Are the research method and presentation appropriate to the research subject matter, questions and data?
- 3) Does the research examine previous research and existing conditions in order to provide a context for the work?
- 4) Is the research competently executed?
- 5) Are the analysis and interpretation appropriate to the material generated and to the questions posed?
- 6) Are useful and appropriate interpretations, conclusions and recommendations given, drawn from the research material presented.
- 7) Is the research ethically sound?
- 8) Does the research contribute to knowledge?

Although novel approaches to research appear different and can be unsettling they are still research and, as Saldana (2003) suggests in his ‘primer’ on dramatising data, can intensify representations, they are still research and should be evaluated as such. Novel approaches can strengthen research and make considerable demands upon the researcher, not merely giving greater opportunities to have fun while doing research (a beneficial

side effect that should not be denigrated). Nor should researchers who adopt these approaches suggest that they should be exempt from the basic evaluative questions I have posed.

### **Summary of Recommendations**

In the preceding sections I have made some suggestions for improving the well-being and effectiveness of Governing Governors, possible future research and widening the scope of postgraduate research training, I shall conclude this section with a summary of recommendations drawn from my research which relate to the treatment of Governors within the Prison Service and the enhancement of well-being.

The overarching recommendation based on my application of Brun and Cooper's missing pieces model of employee well-being is to develop a nurturing organisation to be aware of factors that contribute to and detract from well-being. This will enhance well-being and help the Prison Service to retain valuable staff who might otherwise be lost to other employers. Ways to achieve this, drawn from my research are:

More and better preparation for promotion. Identify possible candidates for Governing Governor level posts and work with them as deputies to broaden their skills and experience in a supportive context providing opportunities for effective supervision, feedback and evaluation in both operational and off-site training contexts. Avoid promotion to the level of incompetence. Provide opportunities for experiential learning by, for example, planned periods of acting up for Deputy Governors.

Less of a blanket approach – create more opportunity for Governors to work to their strengths and aptitudes making use of appropriate psychometric tools and by getting to know Governors well, this will assist in effective career and succession planning.

Greater emphasis on soft outcomes, making sure these are not eclipsed by quantifiable aspects of role. Her Majesty's inspectorate can play a major role in this as can tools such as the MQPL developed by Liebling and Arnold (2002).

Ensure targets, audit and inspection protocols and reasoning are useful, relevant and effective. Governors should be encouraged to discuss and question these to ensure that they are appropriate to the different contexts in which they are applied. Those setting targets should adopt a reflexive approach in questioning their own practice.

Encourage stability; avoid the appearance of short-termism and change for its own sake. Frequent changes of Governor can be detrimental to the stability of prisons and may have a negative impact upon the quality of work of Governors who do not stay in post long enough to see changes they make 'bed in' or to reflect upon and consolidate their experience.

Be openly supportive and appreciative of Governors and other staff.

Involve Governors in decision making as far as possible and give value to their experience. Making full use of the experience of governors gives access to a valuable resource while allowing negotiation of role expectations.

Look at the accessibility of training and possibility of sharing training with other groups in public, private and voluntary sectors. This might include local seminars and greater use of IT based interactive materials to improve access and lessen the amount of time spent away from the prison.

Give consideration to the career development of younger Governors, including the possibility of external secondments to avoid boredom or burn-out.

Each of these has been discussed in my thesis and is based on material I have collected during my meetings with Governors.

Considering issues of Governor well-being is particularly important in the context of progressive governance, managerialist approaches to the public sector and, in particular, a Prison Service culture which emphasises standards and audit. Each of these stresses individuality and competition among Governors which, as the material presented in this study suggests, can produce feelings of isolation, powerlessness and insecurity. An emphasis on standards relating to the care of individual prisoners and meeting targets is likely to mitigate against Governors' attempts to build communities and ideas of collectivity within prisons. Developing these ideas of collectivity and responsibility as a member of a community could have an effect on the reduction of reoffending, a principle aim of imprisonment. This view forms the basis of community-centred approaches to justice such as restorative justice, and the use of community sentences as judicial disposal.

Emphasising employee well-being, and taking the measures necessary to ensure it, which have been discussed in this thesis and summarised above, will help create a sense of community within the Prison Service as a whole. This could develop a Service that, while encompassing diverse individuals, aims and approaches, works towards the shared goal of changing lives and 'optimising potential' of prisoners and staff, at all levels. As planned budget cuts threaten to bite deep and painfully, exacerbated by the effects of recession, into the lives of prisoners and those charged with caring for them it becomes more important to take notice of the words of operational staff in strategic planning aimed at protecting the public by keeping prisoners in custody and, in the longer term, reducing reoffending.

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