The N.I. Prison Reform Programme: Progress Made and Challenges Remaining

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Prison Reform Programme

Review of the Northern Ireland Prison Service
Conditions, management and oversight of all prisons
Achievements

• Greater focus on rehabilitation, resettlement and desistance.

• Increased cooperation and engagement with outside agencies to support change.

• Reduced numbers on remand, fine default, young males and females.

• More cost-effective.

• Prison estate improvements and planned reconfiguration.
Challenges Remaining

• Ongoing resourcing difficulties due to wider fiscal situation.

• Managing ‘separated prisoners’, severe mental ill health and personality disorders.

• Strengthening relationships between staff and management as well as enhancing leadership.

• Ensuring Northern Ireland Prison Service and outside agencies work effectively together and recognise how all contribute to the culture, environment and prison reform programme.

• Greater use of data to judge performance.
Spotlight: Prisoner-Prisoner Assaults

NI rate per 1,000
E&W rate per 1,000
Scotland rate per 1,000
Spotlight: Prisoner-Staff Assaults

NI rate per 1,000
E&W rate per 1,000
Scotland rate per 1,000
## Spotlight: Deaths in Custody

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Northern Ireland</th>
<th>England &amp; Wales*</th>
<th>Scotland*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009/2010</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010/2011</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/2012</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/2013</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/2014</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014/2015</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015/2016</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.2</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.6</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.8</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* These figures refer to the calendar year rather than the financial year.
Penal Reforms: Research Evidence

• ‘Paradox of Reform’ – can lead to periods of instability, friction, tension and violence until a new equilibrium and predictability of regime is found.

• Reforms may falter if the following are not recognised and addressed:
  ➢ The cost of reforms (expense and efficiency of system)
  ➢ Limitations of the penal institutions (e.g. design, size, etc.)
  ➢ Political reality of imprisonment
  ➢ Institutional interests and the experiences of those working in prisons

• Tendency to view change management as universal rather than a specific process, contributing to a lack of ‘buy in’ and cultural applicability.
Recommendations

• If using outcomes based accountability:
  - Consider including outcomes focused on communication, consultation and engagement with those working and detained in prison.
  - Appreciate how fiscal challenges restrict reform efforts
  - Allow time for ‘paradox of reform’ effects to be overcome
  - Ensure outcomes for different organisations are complimentary, compatible with the overall reform programme and promote interagency cooperation and efficiency.
  - Outcomes should be within the control of the organisation e.g. should prisons be judged on re-offending rates?
  - Data should take account of the prison population and facilitate comparisons with other jurisdictions.
  - Need for qualitative measures as well as quantitative.
  - What gets measured gets done so choose carefully.
Thanks for your attention.

Questions?

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Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS)

...is a forum that encourages debate on a wide range of research findings, with the overall aim of promoting evidence-based policy and law-making within Northern Ireland.