



CREST

Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats



Managing Terrorism-Related Offenders in Prison

FULL REPORT

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This report is one of a series exploring *Knowledge Management Across the Four Counter-Terrorism 'Ps'*. The project looks at areas of policy and practice that fall within the four pillars of CONTEST. For more information visit www.crestresearch.ac.uk/projects/the-four-counter-terrorism-ps

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1. KEY POINTS

Correctional policy on managing terrorism-related offenders does not have a strong evidence base. The limited research that does exist usually looks at a single context or prison, and typically describes programmes and policies rather than evaluating them. There are also considerable gaps in the research, particularly around managing female and non-Islamist offenders. Current 'good practice' should be thought of as a starting point to be trialled and evaluated rather than 'what works'.

PROBLEMS:

- Identifying prison radicalisation and those driving it is difficult. Dedicated prison intelligence units that liaise with law enforcement and intelligence agencies can support this process and reduce the burden on correctional officers.
 - The ways in which right-wing offenders display their ideological beliefs are less well understood in prisons. This increases the risk that these behaviours might go unchecked and can lead to the perception that staff are sympathetic to right-wing views; increasing the potential for prison radicalisation.
 - Terrorism-related offenders face barriers accessing rehabilitative programmes because of their security status and restricted movements within prisons. Facilitators must work hard to challenge offenders' perceptions and concerns about programmes that can undermine their readiness to engage constructively with interventions.
- Overly punitive regimes and staff can intensify feelings of insecurity which may lead both terrorism-related and non-terrorism offenders to seek security in radical groups; increasing the risk of radicalisation.
 - Effective management of terrorism-related offenders should be informed by the principals of good governance in the wider prison population, including:
 - Hospitable conditions and equal, fair treatment for all prisoners.
 - 'Dynamic security' or working with prisoners in ways that breaks down barriers between staff and prisoners.
 - 'Jail craft', or staff using their experience and discretion to interpret and apply rules in a way that maintains authority and positive relationships with prisoners.
 - Robust staff training is important in effectively managing terrorism-related offenders and should include:
 - Giving officers the skills to identify radicalisation. This includes the knowledge needed to differentiate between religiosity and radicalisation and recognise behaviours, symbols, and dress codes that might indicate support for extremist groups.
 - Building trust between staff and terrorism-related offenders is difficult and takes time. Strong and beneficial relationships can be established with terrorism-related prisoners through perseverance and by creating opportunities to gradually develop respect between staff and prisoners.
 - Strengthening staff members' interpersonal skills and resilience to enable them to develop positive relationships with offenders in circumstances where there can be low levels of trust.

RESPONSES:

- Security and rehabilitation are key aims for the management of all prisoners and should be considered complementary. Ensuring an appropriate balance between these two goals with terrorism-related offenders is particularly important. This should avoid too great an emphasis on security over rehabilitation informed by the perceived threat they pose.

- Creating opportunities for staff to share best practice and information about working with offenders within their institution and across the prison estate.
- Providing offenders with information, feedback, and a chance to voice their opinions has a positive impact on prisoners' willingness to engage in and complete rehabilitative programmes.
- Increase staff confidence around using existing 'jail craft' skills with terrorism-related offenders.

This report is primarily based on academic literature from 2017 onwards. Due to the limitations of this research it draws on some literature from outside this period, grey literature and work from comparable fields, including the management of gang members and sex offenders.

The research is international in scope and includes work undertaken in Australia, Germany, Norway, the Netherlands and the UK. The data that informs these studies is largely drawn from testimonies of prison officers, correctional staff and intervention providers, although some include insights from offenders themselves.

2. UNDERSTANDING THE PRISON CONTEXT

The aim of rehabilitating terrorism-related offenders is enabled by a secure prison environment.

The aims of managing terrorism-related offenders are typically described as security or rehabilitation focused. Although prison management policies are usually formulated at the national level, the day-to-day management of offenders differs considerably at regional and local levels. In the UK, prisons place different levels of emphasis on security or rehabilitation. These two principles are complementary. In the limited evaluation studies on the management of high-risk prisoners, research suggests that the threat offenders pose reduces as they engage in rehabilitative programmes. These are most effective when carried out in a safe, secure prison.¹

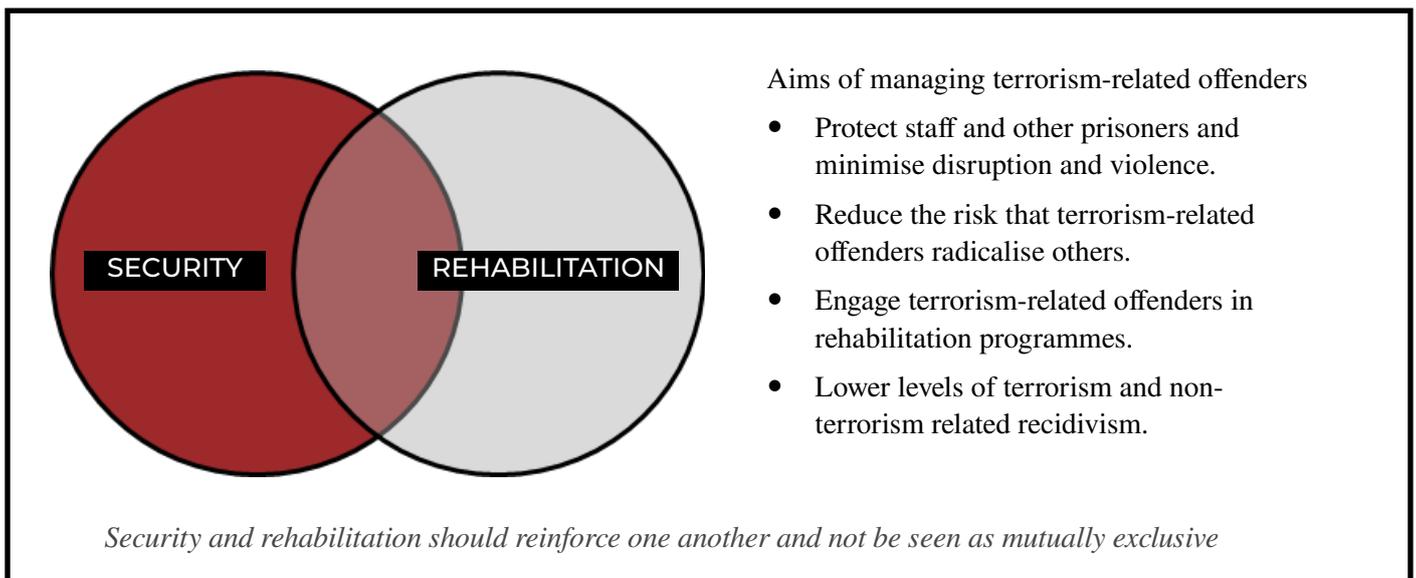
Whilst attempting to reduce recidivism remains a central goal of most criminal justice systems it is not straightforward to use this as a measure of the successful management of terrorism-related offenders. Government figures suggest the recidivism rate for

terrorism-related offenders in England and Wales released between 2013 and 2019 is 3 per cent. Studies have shown the average international rate of recidivism for terrorism-offenders is around 2.9 per cent. With such low numbers, achieving and attributing any further reduction to successful prison management is challenging.²

THE PRISON ENVIRONMENT

Offenders' perceptions of their situation inform their behaviour. Prison conditions that exacerbate grievances or fears over security can increase the risk of radicalisation.

Prison influences offenders' attitudes and behaviours, placing inmates in stressful situations that can lead to antisocial attitudes and violence. Custodial experiences impact offenders' response to the prison environment and influence the potential for radicalisation. Punitive regimes and harsh conditions can increase the risk of



1 Knowledge on the role of prison context is based on a small number (n=3) of studies of terrorism-related offenders from UK and Australia that draw on interviews with prison staff, facilitators of rehabilitation programmes, and, in one case, the prisoners themselves (Chapman, 2017; Williams, 2017; Thompson, 2018). This is supported by research on sex offenders which emphasises the importance of a secure prison environment (Spencer & Ricciardelli, 2017; Blagden & Wilson, 2019).

2 Renard (2020) provides a detailed overview and comparison of the recidivism rates of terrorism-related offenders by country. Renard's study of 557 convicted Islamist terrorists in Belgium found that only 2.3 per cent engaged in another terrorism-related offence post-release between 1990 and 2019 (see also Altier et al 2019.)

prison radicalisation, as can violent inmate cultures, racism, and language or other barriers that can increase social isolation.

Prisons can feel like dangerous places, especially for new or minority offenders. This includes Muslim prisoners, who often perceive themselves to be at particular risk of victimisation. Offenders who feel unsafe commonly seek protection in social groups. Like gangs, extremist networks offer prisoners security and a means of adapting to the institutional environment. Those entering the custodial system who are already known to extremist prisoners can feel that breaking this association puts them at risk.³

SEGREGATION AND DISPERSAL

Countries have reached different assessments about the strengths and limitations of dispersing or segregating terrorism-related offenders, but there has been little evaluation of what works.

In most Western countries, terrorism-related offenders are given the highest level of security classification. However, how and where they are held varies. Dispersal involves housing terrorism-related offenders within the general prison population and is the most common strategy.

Some countries employ preventative segregation, also known as concentration or containment, where terrorism-related offenders are separated from other prisoners, either in dedicated units within prisons or in separate facilities. There has been little evaluation of how successful these different methods are. Political factors are often perceived to play a central role in determining which model is pursued.

Most countries use a mixed approach with certain high-risk offenders segregated and the majority dispersed across the prison estate. Offenders are placed in separate wings, units or facilities on the basis of a number of criteria. In the Netherlands, these include the offenders' criminal record; level of anger or frustration; vulnerability; susceptibility to influence; and potential

| COUNTRY | DOMINANT APPROACH | HAS SEPARATION BEEN USED? |
|----------------|-------------------|---|
| Australia | Dispersal | Yes, decided by individual states. Only New South Wales chose separation |
| Belgium | Dispersal | No |
| Canada | Dispersal | No |
| France | Dispersal | Yes, although criticism of a short-lived experiment with segregation has meant the policy has yet to be fully implemented |
| Germany | Dispersal | No |
| Israel | Separation | Yes |
| Russia | Dispersal | No, but the policy is being considered by the Russian Security Council |
| Saudi Arabia | Separation | Yes |
| Spain | Separation | Yes, Islamist-related offenders (the largest group of extremist prisoners) are separated, ETA-related offenders are not |
| Netherlands | Separation | Yes |
| Philippines | Mixed | Yes |
| United Kingdom | Mixed | Yes |
| United States | Mixed | Yes |

³ The influence of the prison environment on offenders' behaviour is described in the wider criminological research (Pyrooz et al. 2017; Wooldredge, 2020), as well as work that focuses specifically on terrorist prisoners (Jones & Narag, 2019; Liebling & Williams, 2018; LaFree et al. 2019). The unique challenges faced by these offenders are highlighted in studies of prisons in the UK, Norway and the United States (Hansen, 2016; Zahn, 2017; Liebling & Williams, 2018; LaFree et al. 2019). A correlation between punitive prison regimes and increased potential for radicalisation is identified by Jones and Narag based on ten years of ethnographic research in correctional facilities in the Philippines (2019).

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Managing Terrorism-Related Offenders in Prison

battlefield experience. By contrast, in Australia's single dedicated facility for terrorism-related offenders, selection is largely informed by the nature of the offence rather than on the level of risk they are assessed to pose.

Of those countries which practise containment only a few are able to house their entire population in separate facilities. After several changes of policy, the Netherlands built two dedicated facilities for terrorism-related offenders. Spain houses Islamist offenders in separate units within ordinary prisons whilst Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) prisoners are dispersed within the general population.

There is not yet a strong evidence base to help determine the most effective model for housing terrorism offenders. A number of parameters impact where and when segregation, dispersal, or a mixed approach is most suitable and how they operate in practice. These include internal prison dynamics, the degree of autonomy prisons have, the scale of the problem, and the political context. These issues change over time and influence the relative balance between the pros and cons of each model.

Significant challenges face efforts to encourage offenders in separation units to engage in rehabilitative programmes. Some studies attribute this to offenders' perceptions of discrimination over their exceptional treatment, whilst ideological objections to taking part may be more pronounced in the most entrenched offenders.⁴ In these cases, segregation can be in tension with rehabilitative goals.

⁴ *Rushchenko (2019)* provides an overview of different policies used internationally for housing terrorism-related offenders. The benefits and challenges of these approaches are highlighted in studies from the UK, Australia, and the Netherlands (*Butler, 2017*; *Williams, 2017*; *Liebling & Williams, 2018*; *Thompson, 2018*; *van der Heide & Schuurman, 2018*; *Jones & Narag, 2019*). Two studies have examined the process of setting up and implementing rehabilitative programmes in UK separation centres (*Rushchenko, 2018*; *Powis et al. 2019*).

UNDERSTANDING THE PRISON CONTEXT

Knowledge Management Across the Four Counter-Terrorism 'Ps'

| | BENEFITS | CHALLENGES |
|--------------------|--|--|
| DISPERSAL | <p>Dispersal is less expensive than segregation units.</p> <p>Offenders are not subject to the same stigma or marginalisation that results from placement in a special unit.</p> <p>Reduces terrorism-related offenders' collective influence and capacity to recreate operational structures or group hierarchies.</p> <p>Terrorism-related offenders may benefit from exposure to individuals with different beliefs or backgrounds.</p> | <p>Crime cultures have the opportunity to interact and mix.</p> <p>Heightens the risk of other prisoners being radicalised.</p> <p>Specialist staff may not be available. General staff may not fully understand terrorism-related offenders or markers of risk.</p> <p>Terrorism-related management tools and rehabilitative programmes may not be available in every prison.</p> |
| SEGREGATION | <p>Dedicated regimes for managing terrorism-related offenders can be easier to facilitate.</p> <p>May provide opportunities for staff and prisoners to build positive relationships.</p> <p>Removing problematic prisoners from the general prison population can reduce the potential for tension and disruption.</p> <p>Segregating terrorism-related offenders is often politically popular.</p> <p>Specially trained staff can be pooled to work with terrorism-related offenders.</p> <p>Staff can become proficient working with terrorism-related offenders.</p> <p>Surveillance and monitoring of terrorism-offenders can be concentrated.</p> <p>The risk of prisoners being radicalised by terrorism-related offenders is reduced.</p> | <p>Concentrating violent offenders can increase the potential for co-ordinated activism and violence within prisons.</p> <p>Determining which offenders warrant segregation can be challenging. This is often dictated by the capacity of units.</p> <p>Offenders interested in rehabilitative work can be deterred by social and other pressure from other prisoners they are segregated with.</p> <p>Offenders may deliberately try to be moved to the more modern conditions in segregation units.</p> <p>Prisoners can circumvent restrictions on contact with one another and in some cases, the outside world, even where closely monitored.</p> <p>Recruiting skilled, trained staff can be challenging.</p> <p>Removing certain prisoners does not entirely mitigate the risk of radicalisation in the general prison population.</p> <p>Segregation units are expensive to set up and run.</p> <p>Some offenders deliberately seek the status that comes with segregation units.</p> <p>Special units have the potential to entrench risk-labels assigned to the people they house.</p> <p>Terrorism-related offenders can develop stronger relationships with one another and reinforce each other's beliefs, furthering their radicalisation.</p> |

There is limited research on the comparative benefits and challenges of segregation and dispersal models. The factors set out in this table are ordered alphabetically rather than by their relative importance or strength of evidence.

3. MANAGING TERRORISM-RELATED OFFENDERS

*Prison staff need sufficient knowledge and intelligence gathering capacity to address the diverse nature of prison radicalisation and avoid unwittingly exacerbating the problem*⁵

There is little academic literature on the day-to-day management of terrorism-related offenders. That which does exist is largely based on Islamist or Northern Ireland-related terrorism. However, comparisons are possible between the way they and other high-risk prisoner groups, including gang members and sex offenders, are managed.

Terrorism-related offenders are not a homogenous group. As far as possible, frontline staff should deal with offenders' management needs on an individual basis. Good governance relies on 'dynamic security', which involves working with prisoners in a way that breaks down the barrier between staff and offenders.

Signs of prison radicalisation can be difficult to detect. Radicalisation pathways are diverse and non-linear, making it hard to draw similarities across cases. Offenders are primarily identified as at risk of radicalisation due to their associations or behaviours. The process of interpreting prisoners' behaviour can be influenced by biases and misperceptions.

Prison staff should not equate outward displays of religiosity as signs of radicalisation. A lack of understanding of the Islamic faith can lead staff to misinterpret rituals as acts of rebellion or attempts to exert power. Offenders' perceptions of racism and discrimination can push prisoners towards radical groups and undermine dynamic security.

Some countries try to differentiate between offenders who attempt to radicalise others and those prone to being radicalised. However, simplistic distinctions are

CASE STUDY: Zubair

Zubair is a Muslim, non-terrorism offender from Norway convicted of rape. His case highlights how prison management can impact radicalisation and deradicalisation processes. Despite risk markers of susceptibility to radicalisation, Zubair was initially housed in a high-security facility that included terrorism-related offenders. The violent prison culture and nature of his sentence meant he became fearful of other prisoners, which led him to seek protection from a radical Muslim gang.

Zubair's lack of language skills made it hard to communicate with officers and staff misinterpreted outward displays of religiosity as attempts to exert power. These issues meant he came to accept narratives about racism and harassment towards Muslim prisoners. The absence of adequate support or religious authority was filled by radical inmates. As his radicalisation deepened, Zubair demonstrated his loyalty to the group through violence and recruited other prisoners into the network.

Zubair's transfer to another facility with a different culture opened the door to rehabilitation. Rather than viewing him with suspicion, officers spent considerable time trying to understand his point of view and unpick his hostility to staff. By persevering and through small acts that signified respect and trust, such as being given the responsibility to complete certain prison work independently, two officers were able to build a close relationship with Zubair and help improve his language skills. Zubair was eventually able to take part in a critical thinking programme supported by an imam. Together these interventions helped him move away from extremism.

The case study on 'Zubair' is drawn from Hansen (2018).

⁵ The importance of prison staff is demonstrated in long-term case studies of facilities housing terrorism-related offenders in Norway and the Philippines (Hansen, 2018; Jones & Narag, 2019) as well as recommendations identified in relevant practitioner focused literature (RAN, 2016; Powis et al. 2019; Ronco et al. 2019).

not easy to make. Those involved in prison radicalisation and violence are often outwardly compliant and without proof it is difficult to sanction them without furthering narratives of discrimination.

Some prisons have established dedicated intelligence units responsible for monitoring and evaluating prisoners' activities. They assess the risk of radicalisation and identify any ongoing associations with suspected extremists outside the prison. These units facilitate information sharing with external agencies, which helps to address a common complaint of prison management about the lack of dedicated intelligence they receive about prisoners.

'JAIL CRAFT' AND MANAGING STIGMATISED POPULATIONS

*Correctional staff are the most significant influence on prison cultures and need strong interpersonal skills to build relationships with stigmatised prisoners, such as terrorism-related offenders, and maintain a safe environment*⁶

Prisoners encounter prison authority through day-to-day contact with staff. Officers shape offenders' perceptions about the legitimacy of rules and whether to respect or resist them. In this way, prison management influences prison culture. Correctional officers employ 'jail craft'. This involves the tacit use of officers' experience and discretion to translate

rules into practice. Used properly, jail craft enables staff to maintain order whilst preserving functional relationships with prisoners, even in high-security settings.

Terrorism-related offenders present specific challenges for prison staff. They often require higher levels of supervision because of the conditions attached to their security status, such as monitoring educational and reading material. Negative societal attitudes towards terrorism-related offenders can influence prisoner officers' views, which can make it harder to build positive relationships. Staff working with sex offenders develop individual cognitive strategies to compartmentalise personal interactions from knowledge of offenders' crimes. Officers understand that functional relationships help them successfully fulfil their role and increase their personal safety.

BUILDING TRUST WITH TERRORISM-RELATED OFFENDERS

Testimonies from prison officers in the UK, Norway, and Australia stress the importance of trust in the effective management of terrorism-related offenders. Success rests on perseverance and time, as building up trust can be a difficult and gradual process. After an initial period of trust-building, prison officers have reported enjoying positive and constructive relationships with terrorism-related offenders.⁷

GOOD PRACTICE: for building trust and rapport with terrorism-related offenders

Although context-specific and based on limited research, practices which seem to help strengthen staff/offender relationships include:

- **Transparency** – Prison officers should ensure prisoners are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities.
- **Adherence to standard, consistent regimes and rules** – Staff should explain to terrorism-related offenders why they are subject to any additional restrictions.
- **Prison officer characteristics** – To engage effectively with offenders and build rapport officers should demonstrate compassion and concern for offenders' welfare.
- **Prisoner-staff relationships are dynamic** – The boundaries of these relationships are context specific and need to be constantly monitored and adapted.
- **Separating stigmatised offenders may provide opportunities for engagement** – Officers and prisoners from special units for sex offenders felt more comfortable and built better relationships without fear of repercussions or stigmatisation from other prisoners.

⁶ The concept of 'jail craft' emerges from research interviews with prison staff (Peacock et al. 2018; Wooldredge, 2020). The need to develop individual cognitive processes to work with sex-offenders is recorded in a number of qualitative studies based on the testimonies of correctional officers (Connor, 2018; van den Berg et al. 2018; Blagden & Wilson, 2019). No research on the mental health needs of terrorism-related offenders could be located outside of accounts recorded in a detailed study of the Norwegian prison system that, again, included the testimony of staff members (Hansen, 2018).

⁷ Trust-building practices are detailed in a number of studies that took place in prisons or that involve interviews with correctional staff (Hansen, 2016; Chapman, 2017; Weeks, 2018; Cherney 2020; Dhimi et al. 2020).

4. INTERVENTIONS AND REHABILITATION PROGRAMMES

Globally, prison-based interventions and rehabilitation have become an important aspect of managing terrorism-related offenders and are part of many counter-terrorism strategies. Whilst their capacity to bring about lasting change has yet to be fully demonstrated, the evidence about what supports prisoners' engagement and completion of these programmes is better established.

CONTEXT

Interventions and rehabilitation programmes for terrorism-related offenders differ and are context specific. Although limited, research focusing on these programmes has identified some good practice which helps to establish an environment that maximises the potential for successful delivery. The most common considerations highlighted in studies on terrorism-related offenders include:⁸

Prisoners' day-to-day needs must be addressed first

Offenders must have a certain level of mental stability before any form of intervention can take place. Tackling these needs can provide a means of building trust.

Rehabilitation "is about a change in the way a person behaves. So the action of rehabilitation might involve the provision of interventions to remove the propensity, desire or necessity to offend" (Robinson and Crow, 2009:2).

Interventions should be facilitated by specialists

Offenders often do their homework on facilitators. Staff must be both knowledgeable in their subject matter and able to gain the respect of participants. They should have credibility and ideally, some independence from the state.

Ongoing evaluation and refinement

programmes should be constantly evaluated and good practice institutionalised through training.

Other good practice identified in some existing programmes for terrorism-related offenders include:⁹

Buy-in from all staff

All personnel, including those without a direct role in delivering interventions, have a part to play in maintaining conditions conducive to rehabilitation.

Programmes must be resistant to sabotage from radicalised prisoners

Hierarchical systems, where authoritative offenders pressure others not to participate in interventions, should be mitigated quickly. Offenders should be empowered to make their own decisions.

Staff must be resilient to abuse, disruption, or aggression from participants

Even those who go on to complete programmes may initially seek to test facilitators' boundaries.

Location can encourage engagement

Hosting intervention sessions in informal settings, such as spaces in or near the participant's wing or landing, can help ease their anxieties and reduce security challenges for prison staff.

Establishing an atmosphere of respect

Informal practices, such as shaking hands or engaging in small talk before each session, can help break down barriers between facilitators and participants. Such practices often emerge spontaneously; staff should identify and reinforce those that appear beneficial.

Reflection and support for staff

Facilitators should undertake debriefings, ideally after each session, to reflect on what worked or didn't work; express frustrations; and strengthen morale.

⁸ These factors were stressed in virtually every study of intervention programmes for terrorism-related offenders, particularly those in the UK, Nigeria and Australia (Barkindo & Bryans, 2016; Chapman, 2017; Cherney, 2020).

⁹ Many of these factors are highlighted in Chapman's (2017) case study from the author's time delivering a rehabilitation programme in Northern Ireland. This was also supplemented with insights from studies of interventions in Australia, Nigeria and Sri Lanka (Bell, 2015; Barkindo & Bryans, 2016; Hettiarachchi, 2018).

INITIAL PARTICIPATION

Whilst participation in rehabilitation interventions may be mandatory for certain terrorism-related offenders in the UK, most programmes are voluntary and open to at-risk individuals convicted of non-terrorism offences.

The same is true for the majority of programmes internationally. Many of the factors that encourage individuals to voluntarily take part in interventions also support the active participation of those who are required to do so. These include:¹⁰

Transparent enrolment processes

This increases the perceived legitimacy of the programme and enables offenders to follow through their initial exploration of the intervention.

Timely provision of information

Initial group sessions providing information about the programme should be accompanied by the opportunity for one-on-one meetings with facilitators.

Giving offenders a voice

Terrorism-related offenders, gang members, and sex offenders all stress the value of putting 'their side forward' and having the opportunity to tell their story without feeling judged. Staff should provide opportunities for offenders to do this to demonstrate the benefits of rehabilitative programmes.

Equitable processes

Rehabilitative programmes that emphasise shared decision-making and an equal voice for staff and prisoners may feel unfamiliar to members of extremist organisations with strict hierarchies. Facilitators should factor in a period of adjustment to account for this.

Motivational interviewing

Providing the opportunity for individuals to explain their reasons for taking part in interventions can encourage offenders to 'buy into' programmes.

BARRIERS TO REHABILITATIVE PROGRAMMES

Despite widespread recognition of the importance of rehabilitation, there are barriers which limit the ability of terrorism-related offenders to access and complete programmes.

INSTITUTIONAL AND SITUATIONAL BARRIERS

Terrorism-related offenders are commonly subject to the highest levels of controls and restrictions on their movements in prison. The nature of their detention, security measures, and reward/punishment systems can hinder offenders' ability to participate and complete programmes. One study found that the harsher the prison regime the lower the likelihood of successful rehabilitation. Specific barriers include offenders:¹¹

- Being unaware of rehabilitation programmes.
- Finding it hard to understand or meet the entry requirements for programmes.
- Facing difficulties accessing rehabilitation programmes, especially where they take place outside their wing or in another facility.
- Not having enough out-of-cell time to attend or properly complete programmes.

OFFENDER PERCEPTIONS

Many terrorism-related offenders refuse to engage with rehabilitative programmes. Some are ideologically opposed to working with prison authorities they see as part of an illegitimate government. A study on a rehabilitative programme in Northern Ireland demonstrated that only Loyalists participated whilst their Republican counterparts refused to take part.

Terrorism-related prisoners are often reticent to engage in rehabilitative programmes for other reasons. Although involvement in interventions can demonstrate compliance and help make a case for parole, prisoners can fear that staff may use any disclosures made during the programme against them. Non-terrorism offenders invited to take part also have concerns that participating

10 These factors are drawn from research based on interviews with intervention facilitators and prison staff from various countries (Barkindo & Bryans, 2016; Chapman, 2017; Cherney, 2020). The importance gang members and sex offenders attribute to having their voice heard in a non-judgemental setting is recorded in a number of studies (Akerman, 2018; Geiger & Fischer, 2018; Blagden & Wilson, 2019)

11 These barriers were recorded in prisons in the UK, Australia and the Philippines (Chapman, 2017; Thompson, 2018; Jones & Narag, 2019; Cherney, 2020).

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might indicate their support for extremism or mark them out as potential terrorists. Good practice for addressing these issues involves:¹²

- **Programme information** – Providing a straightforward explanation of the programme and what is required of participants at the outset.
- **Clear boundaries** – Blurring the boundaries between law enforcement, security, and intelligence agencies and rehabilitative interventions risks the integrity and effectiveness of programmes. Distinctions should be clearly explained to potential participants and external agencies.
- **Developing trust** – Differentiating the programme from other parts of prison management helps build a trusting environment. Mutual trust is difficult to achieve if staff are privately encouraging participants to inform and report on one another's infractions.
- **Space for discussion** – Making it clear to participants that open, respectful disagreement with facilitators is acceptable and will not be held against them.
- **Demonstrating benefits** – Highlighting that programmes aim to benefit participants, rather than merely meet prison or government objectives, can include explaining tangible outcomes for participants, for example by describing how programmes reduce the risk of returning to prison.

conditions for progressing through the programme, increases participants' motivation.

Goals should be realistic, and setbacks expected

Participants experience a tension between the desire to enact a new self and an environment that constantly reminds them of their past transgressions. Such transitions are difficult, take time, and are frequently non-linear.

Ongoing positive feedback and validation

Staff who hold and express positive attitudes towards offenders are better able to facilitate and motivate rehabilitation.

Highlighting that learning flows both ways

Facilitators should explain that they can learn from participants and are open to improving their own practice as a result. This helps prisoners to feel valued and breaks down the division with staff.

Balancing the needs of individuals and the group

Where programmes include collective activities, participants can criticise staff for being too lenient and overlooking rule transgressions to avoid dropouts. Staff should try and accommodate the individual needs of participants but not at the expense of the wider group.

MAINTAINING PARTICIPATION AND FACILITATING COMPLETION

It is challenging to retain participants and ensure they complete intervention programmes. Drawing on studies of programmes for sex offenders and gang members, some useful guidelines which support completion include:¹³

Clear timeframes

Informing participants about the approximate time period for each stage of the intervention, and the

¹² Two single prison case studies described these considerations in detail; one in the UK (Chapman, 2017), the other in Australia (Cherney, 2020).

¹³ These insights are derived from one study specific to terrorism-related offenders (Chapman, 2017), one on gang members (Ackerman, 2018) and two from sex offenders (Geiger and Fischer, 2018; Blagden & Wilson, 2019).

5. MANAGING RIGHT-WING OFFENDERS

Right-wing offenders pose an overlooked challenge to prison security because of the less visible ways they demonstrate their ideological affiliation. Perceptions that staff tolerate these behaviours and attitudes can increase the risk of radicalisation in other groups.¹⁴

Studies of right-wing offenders are virtually absent from the literature on managing terrorism-related offenders. No research focusing on right-wing offenders in UK prisons could be identified. Although a number of European countries have historical experiences with right-wing violence, most institutions lack a clear and consistent strategy for supervising these offenders. Transferable lessons are also limited because right-wing offenders have often been treated comparatively leniently. They have sometimes been considered victims of society as well as perpetrators, especially because many have been juveniles.

Research indicates that right-wing offenders can enjoy positive relationships with staff and have fewer difficulties adapting to prison because of experiences of authoritarianism and hierarchy in groups. Staff generally have limited knowledge of the ways right-wing offenders display their ideological affiliations. This means that offenders are able to display their ideological commitments with less fear of sanctions.

If staff fail to take action against right-wing extremism it can fuel narratives that they are sympathetic to these offenders' beliefs. This has the potential to increase tensions and lead to radicalisation within the prison. Staff should receive training to recognise right-wing ideological practices.

Intervention programmes for right-wing offenders have developed from the 'bottom-up'. Although some programmes receive state funding, most have been set up and facilitated by former right-wing extremists or NGOs rather than statutory agencies. Some, like Exit Sweden, rely on prisoners approaching them and

maintain contact via visits and phone calls. Offenders are given the chance to take part in therapy and long-term anti-violence programmes.

Independence from the government helps engage offenders who are often suspicious of state involvement in rehabilitation programmes. However, this status has limitations when it comes to measuring effectiveness. Exit Sweden is not allowed to maintain a database of contact details to follow up with former participants. Many of its counterparts in other states have also not been subject to formal evaluations.

¹⁴ Given the limited research in this area, *Özsöz's (2011)* long-term, qualitative study of 37 violent right-wing offenders in Germany and *Stern's (2014)* case study of a single Swedish neo-Nazi provide the basis for these findings. They are supplemented by case studies and insights from practitioners working with right-wing offenders in German prisons and rehabilitation programmes (*RAN, 2017; RAN, 2018*).

6. ASSESSING THE EVIDENCE BASE

The evidence base for managing and rehabilitating terrorism-related prisoners is shallow and narrowly focused. Further research is needed to understand if the lessons drawn from different countries and offender groups are applicable to terrorism-related offenders.

Correctional policy on terrorism-related offenders lacks a strong evidence base. Contemporary programmes are in their infancy and have yet to be properly evaluated. Most research is based on limited data or studies of a single prison.

There are significant gaps in the evidence. Virtually all research focuses on male offenders and is primarily based on Islamist offenders or prisoners in Northern Ireland. This leaves a significant gap with respect to right-wing, female, and juvenile offenders. There is little evidence about the relative benefits of dispersal over separation strategies and more independent evaluations of prison-based intervention programmes are needed. A better understanding of the needs of terrorism-related offenders is required, as is a more detailed account of how to support prison staff working with this population.

These areas should be key priorities for future research, although all aspects of the management and rehabilitation of terrorism-related offenders require further study. There is a significant need for evaluative rather than descriptive work.

Drawing insights across contexts should be approached cautiously. The context and goals of supervising terrorism-related offenders in the UK has changed significantly. For example, there was no policy of trying to deradicalise prisoners in Northern Ireland and the potential community impact of prison policies was more significant. Recommendations for managing and rehabilitating terrorism-related offenders should be treated as current good practice rather than examples of 'what works' and will need to be adapted to local contexts on the basis of further research and engagement with practitioners.

READ MORE

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