

CREST

MANAGING TERRORISM-RELATED OFFENDERS IN PRISON

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INTRODUCTION

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.

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.

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 principles 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.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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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.
- 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.

ABOUT THIS PROJECT

This Executive Summary comes from the Full Report from the project *Knowledge Management Across the Four Counter-Terrorism 'Ps'*. You can find the Full Report [here](#).