

Impact case study (REF3b)

<p>Institution: University of Bradford</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: C22</p>
<p>Title of case study: Going beyond race: establishing recognition of diversity and equalities in prisons.</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Research carried out at the University of Bradford has directly and indirectly influenced how prisons in England and Wales respond to issues of diversity and equalities; consequently impacting the lived experience of those working and residing in prisons. The research has contributed to the development of a national equalities policy framework; the development of new national and local policies and guidance for the care and management of transgender offenders; revisions to and widening of the mechanisms for prisoner reporting and investigation of discrimination and inequality, and the development of human capital through a more equalities literate workforce and prisoner population.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The underpinning research originated with the collaboration of Dr Victoria Lavis (Lecturer 2006-2013, Senior Lecturer 2013-present) Dr Malcolm Cowburn (Senior Lecturer 2006-2008) and Dr Tammi Walker (Lecturer 2006 to present) in 2007 at the University of Bradford. The research continues at the University of Bradford extending into a three year ESRC-funded grant (Lavis, 2013-2016). Prior to this research, little was known about the response or effectiveness of prisons to issues of diversity. National Offender Management Service (NOMS) policy and practice had been shaped in response to the racist murder of Zahid Mubarek in Feltham Young Offenders Institution in 2000 and the subsequent finding of the Commission for Racial Equalities (2003) that NOMS was in breach of its legal obligations. Policy and practice therefore focussed almost exclusively on race/ethnicity and failed to capture the breadth of inequalities experienced by other diverse minorities. Lavis, Cowburn and Walker (1,2) highlighted this omission, specifically in relation to offending behaviour programmes. In 2008 Lavis and Cowburn developed collaborations with the equalities policy making body of NOMS; the Race Equality Action Group; the Diversity Manager of a High Security prison and prisoners representing wider strands of diversity including age, disability, sexual orientation, transgender, religion/belief, and race/ethnicity (3). These collaborations informed the development of three ESRC-funded research projects, enabling the knowledge generated to impact directly into NOMS national policy development and local policy and practice.</p> <p>The 2009/10 pilot research (4), explored how diversity was responded to in prison and crucially, developed and tested the first methodology for assessing this response. The methodology, subsequently noted by ESRC reviewers as ‘innovative’ and ‘creative’, assessed the suitability of an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) informed approach. The research challenged assumptions, raised in research literature, that the focus of AI on identifying ‘life at its best’ as the starting point of any inquiry might prevent discovery of the negative aspects of prison life. The pilot demonstrated this concern was invalid, illustrating that AI identifies strengths and weaknesses, whilst actively engaging the interest and involvement of prisoners, prison staff and senior prison management (5). The research also generated alternate ways of theorising diversity in prisons, highlighting the significance of ‘intersectionality’ as a way of understanding how people experience prison life (5,6). Previously, theorising of diversity and inequality in prisons had primarily focussed on only one aspect of personhood (e.g. ethnicity) rather than how aspects of personhood intersect in the individual (e.g. age, sexuality and disability) contributing to the political, social and economic dynamics of oppression and inequality. The 2010/11 research (5) targeted three specific areas of responding to diversity identified in the 2009 pilot: sensitivity to equality in security searching; the management of transgender prisoners; and the training of prisoner diversity representatives in the intersectional nature of diversity. An innovative workshop based approach was developed enabling, for the first time, policy advisors, national trainers, academic researchers, prison staff and</p>

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prisoners to work together. The value of the underpinning research to the field is highlighted by the decision of the ESRC in January 2013 to fund a new multi-site research project, incorporating both public and private sector prisons. This work, already underway, extends and develops the methodological and theoretical enhancements of the underlying research, to generate a detailed, critical understanding of how UK prisons respond to diversity.

3. References to the research

1. Cowburn M, Lavis V, Walker T. (2008a) BME sex offenders in prison: the problem of participation in offending behaviour groupwork programmes – a tripartite model of understanding. *British Journal of Community Justice* 6(1): 19-34. [Peer Reviewed]
2. Cowburn M, Lavis V, Walker T. (2008b) Black and minority ethnic sex offenders in prison. *Prison Service Journal* 177: 44-49. [Peer Reviewed]
3. Cowburn M, Lavis V. (with Bird) (2010) *Appreciative inquiry into the Diversity Strategy of HMP Wakefield*. Report to HMP Wakefield. Available at: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-000-22-3441/read>.
[ESRC Peer Reviewer comments:
 - ‘The findings present a nuanced picture of diversity issues in prisons, which are both empirically and theoretically interesting and I think make a contribution to knowledge in this field’.
 - ‘I think that there are wide ranging impacts here and many of the impacts can be directly attributed to the project, locally and nationally’.]
4. Cowburn M, Lavis V. (2009) Race Relations in Prison: managing performance and developing engagement. *British Journal of Community Justice* 7(3): 77-89. [Peer Reviewed]
5. Lavis V, Cowburn M. (2013) Using a Prisoner Advisory group to develop diversity research in a maximum-security prison: a means of enhancing prisoner participation or participatory research? *Groupwork*, Special Edition 23(3). Online. DOI: 10.1921/55011230301 [Peer Reviewed]
6. Lavis VJ, Walker T. (2013) A Contemporary Reflection on Feminist Criminology: Whose Side Are We On?, in Cowburn M, Duggan M, Robinson A, Senior P. (eds.) *Values in Criminology and Criminal Justice*. Bristol: Policy Press: 57-76. Hardback: 978-1-4473-0035-9. [Peer Reviewed]

The following research awards also demonstrate the quality of the research:

01/03/09 – 30/11/09, Cowburn and Lavis. *Appreciative inquiry into the Diversity Strategy of HMP Wakefield*. ESRC Small Grant: RES-000-22-3441. £79,719

06/09/13 – current, Lavis. *An Appreciative Inquiry into the response to diversity in three Yorkshire Prisons*. ESRC Standard Grant: ES/K005049/1. £644,514. ESRC Peer Review Rating of Standard Grant Application: :‘Excellent’ and ‘Outstanding’

- This is an outstanding application from an excellent team. It is exemplary in its construction and process and clearly builds on work already conducted.
- Lastly, it was refreshing to see impact and capacity building being considered from the outset.

4. Details of the impact

The pilot and follow on research has had a significant and enduring transformative impact on the development of national and local policies which guide the response to diversity in the 124 prisons of England and Wales. These significant enhancements to policy and practice were enabled by the creation of Executive Steering Groups for both research projects (a,b). Constituted by key,

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national and local, policy stakeholders these groups facilitated engagement with and understanding of research findings as they emerged, enabling rapid uptake and response at a policy level (c,d).

The substantial reach of impacts arising from the pilot research is attested to by the Head of NOMS Equalities Group (the policy unit for diversity issues) who commissioned copies of the research report for distribution across the entire prison estate and confirms its impact in shaping the national equalities framework policy launched in 2011 (c,d). This impact on policy was further extended within the High Security estate by the researchers' direct engagement of prison governors responsible for managing diversity in their own establishments.

The enduring impact of the pilot research is evidenced by NOMS subsequent decision making. For example, in 2010, NOMS Equalities Group adopted a key recommendation of the research; that there should be greater prisoner consultation when developing guidance for prison staff about diversity. The significance of adopting this recommendation for prison stakeholders nationally, is attested to by the Head of Equalities Group (c,d) and locally, by the Governing Governor of the pilot prison (e,f). Both sources highlight benefits to prison staff in terms of improved support and subsequent confidence in responding appropriately and effectively to diversity issues and indirect benefits to prisoners through their lived experience of staff responses to them.

The Head of Equalities group also attests that the conclusion of the research that AI is a methodology effective in engaging prisoners and staff in the often negatively focussed prison environment impacted their decision making when commissioning future research. For example, the decision by NOMS to commission NACRO (National Association for the Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders) to adopt a similar approach in the design of equality impact assessment and to produce improved guidance for prison staff to enable them to more effectively undertake prisoner consultation (c,d).

Drawing on other findings of the research, NOMS also commissioned good practice guidance and a national training package for prisoner equalities representatives and developed mediatory rather than adversarial methods for dealing with complaints relating to diversity issues (c,d). The importance to NOMS of being able to demonstrate the significance of these impacts in terms of the benefits they have generated for individual prisons, staff and prisoners is evidenced by their commitment to and collaboration with the third ESRC funded research project currently being undertaken by the University of Bradford team and will form part of our future impact reporting.

The reach of impact extends beyond policy to improvements for practitioners and prison service professionals. For example, prior to the pilot research, prisoners reported race related inequality via the RIRF system (Racial Incident Reporting Form). However, there was no mechanism to report other forms of diversity related inequality. The pilot research recommended this system be changed to a DIRF (Discrimination Incident Reporting Form) (a). This recommendation was subsequently adopted and is incorporated in the national PSI-32 issued 14.04.2011 (g). The reach and significance of this impact is extensive since the DIRF remains the *only* mechanism that the 80,193 prisoners from all protected minorities (NOMS, March 2012) have to report inequality and discrimination they are experiencing. The research also highlighted that prisoners preferred non-adversarial methods of resolving issues relating to diversity and inequality (a). This confirmed to NOMS the importance of face-to-face interactions between staff and prisoners in ensuring fairness in prisons and influenced its decision to introduce structured communications techniques in the prison setting (c,d).

The follow on research also generated impacts which had both local significance and national reach and significance. The research was delivered via a series of innovative, knowledge exchange workshops where prison staff and/or prisoners worked with diversity experts.

The research influenced the development of reference guides to assist staff in respecting diversity when searching prisoners. The Governing Governor of the pilot prison has described how an audit of security searching subsequent to the workshop demonstrated improved staff confidence in

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searching prisoners from diverse minorities (f). Whilst this demonstrates a direct benefit to staff, it also benefits prisoners through more dignified and respectful searching of their person and belongings. A second workshop was undertaken with prisoners who were working as representatives for diversity on their residential wings. The workshop developed the representatives' appreciation of the intersectional nature of diversity and encouraged them to develop strategies for supporting others which moved beyond their previous focus on singular strands of diversity. Subsequently, the representatives used this understanding to produce and implement a training package to help new prisoner diversity representatives understand diversity from an intersectional perspective. This training package has been shared with all eight prisons within the High Security Estate benefitting diversity representatives and those diverse minority prisoners they support.

Wider, national reach and significance were generated by a final workshop which focussed on the development of policy and practice relating to prisoner sexuality, in particular transgender. Learning arising from this workshop was subsequently incorporated into training materials for the management of transsexual prisoners by the National Prison Service trainer who attended the workshop (h). This enabled transmission of the learning across the local and wider national workforce. The same workshop impacted on the creation of a local policy for the management of transgender prisoners which was subsequently shared between prisons within the High Security estate (e,f). This local policy was significant as, at that time, a national policy had not yet been released (i). Beneficiaries of this policy included transgender prisoners at the local prison and subsequently in the wider High Security estate and the prison staff responsible for their care by providing clarity about respectful and decent treatment of transgender offenders in terms of access to facilities, personal searching techniques, and the rights and responsibilities of both staff and transgender offenders.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

All research reports, end of award and impact reports, workshop materials for the KE impact workshops, conference papers etc. are in the public domain, published via ESRC society today at the following two URLs:

- a. <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-000-22-3441/read>
- b. <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-192-22-0047/read>
- c. National Offender Management Service. Head of Women and Equalities Group
- d. 18/11/2010. Letter confirming national and future anticipated impacts from National Offender Management Service. Policy and Performance Development Equalities Group.
- e. National Offender Management Service. Design Manager, National Assessments Team.
- f. 3/10/2011. Letter confirming local impacts on HM Prison Wakefield from Governing Governor, HM Prison Wakefield.
- g. *PSI32/2011 Ensuring Equality*, available at: <http://www.justice.gov.uk/offenders/psis/prison-service-instructions-2011> and as a pdf.
- h. 26/09/2011. Email confirming impact on training for management of transgender offenders from National Trainer and Advisor on the care and management of transgender offenders.
- i. *PSI07/2011 Care and Management of transsexual prisoners*, available at: <http://www.justice.gov.uk/offenders/psis/prison-service-instructions-2011> and as a pdf