

ENGLAND AND WALES

For historic reasons, Great Britain is divided into 3 independent prison administrations: England and Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. As in Spain and Denmark, the English prison administration worked until 5/2007 under the authority of the Home Office. It is now administered by the newly founded Ministry of Justice.

After Holland, England has followed most closely the US-style “zero tolerance” policy in the last 15 years (rather stable rate of criminality, increase of the prison population by more than 50 %). Mark Easton of BBC4 presented in 7/2007 the series “The Crime of our Lives” in which he describes the evolution of crime in British society, the reactions of the public and the law making of successive governments in the last 50 years. Result: tough penal laws were vote winners in elections; neither punitive nor more educational measures changed much the steady rise in crime until 1996. “The Guardian” qualified the overcrowded prisons “a love affair of the British judges with imprisonment” (EN1). In spite of Blair’s tough “anti-social behaviour” stance which was meant to act as a deterrent, re-offending rose from 53 % in 1993 to 59 % in 2001 and 65 % within 2 years of release in 2006.

The White Paper of 2002 “Justice for all” was based on a “mild policy of deterrent” with reasonable prison sentences, leaving space for reintegration measures and, thus, to combat re-offending. For the period 2004 – 2008 and after a very controversial national debate in parliament and the newspapers, the aims remained essentially the same, but with 2 priorities: more security for the public, compensation for the victims (EN2). We are far from the principal aims of penal legislation in Scandinavia, Italy, Germany and the “108 Prison Rules” with priority on “normalisation/reintegration of the prisoner into society”.

The website of “HM Prison Service” describes in detail the organisation of English/Welsh prisons (EN3). Thus, every prison has an “Independent Monitoring Board” (previously “Board of Visitors”) composed of independent citizens, but named by the Home Office (now Ministry of Justice). This board has the right to verify all aspects of prison management, hear complaints by prisoners, suggest changes. There are as well the functions of the “Ombudsman” and the “Chief Inspector of Prisons”.

With regard to the activities and organisations involved in prison life (EN4) , “HM Prison Service” divides them into 17 sections (Counselling on detoxification, family and victim support, probation, youth, education etc). The role of the voluntary sector, its task, significance and the associations involved are described in 3 sections:

- a) **PRISON CHAPLAINCY** – every prison has a team of chaplains of different faiths, such as (EN5):
- Alpha (courses which introduce people to Christianity),
 - Angulimala (support of Buddhist Prison chaplains),
 - Prison Fellowship (see “international organisations),
 - AQRA (Muslim), Hindu, Sikh, Jewish Prison Chaplaincies,
 - Stepping Stones, Salvation Army
 - and, of course, the Anglican and Catholic church.

The chaplains recruit their own volunteer helpers. According to the “Chief Inspector’s” report, there are 6500 “religious” volunteers working in 464 organisations (EN5A). In November 2007, a number of religious associations organised together

with the Ministry of Justice, Clinks and the Howard League a “Prisons Week” under the theme “Standing firm” (EN6). Such meetings are a regular occurrence.

- b) **Community Chaplaincy** (EN7). The idea of this movement comes from Canada. It is a partnership of the prison administration, the social services, the Chaplaincy and the Salvation Army together with local authorities. It appears that the volunteers are recruited mainly from faith-based organisations. The aim is the reintegration of ex-prisoners into normal life by starting the process already during incarceration followed by a kind of close follow-up once they have been released. The NAOPV is supportive of this kind of volunteering, but points out that the NAOPV Prison visitors deal with the detainees exclusively during their time in custody, whereas the Community Chaplaincy works with the prisoners mainly after their release.
- c) **Voluntary Prison Visiting** is explained (What can I do?) as “assisting the Prison Service to achieve its statement of purpose by providing a humanitarian contact, which helps to keep the prisoner in touch with the outside world”. 4 organisations are mentioned as examples (EN8):
- the “National Association of Official Prison Visitors – NAOPV” - the English equivalent of the French ANVP.
 - PAPHYRUS – Prevention of suicides for adolescents,
 - Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT) – organising family visits to the detainees, help for the families, “First night in Custody” Scheme,
 - Samaritans – 24-hour telephone service to prevent suicides, visits to detainees,

Subsequent to the creation of NOMS (National Offender Management Service), the principal aim of which is reducing re-offending, Baroness Scotland launched in 12/2005 the “New Guide for Volunteering in Prisons” (EN9). On that occasion, she said that “there are up to 14.000 external volunteers offering services to the prisoners and 300 working in 75 external Visitors’ Centres” (EN10). CLINK (Community Links) says that there are altogether 600 voluntary prison associations in the UK which work with offenders and more than 7000 volunteers.

Per a joint PACT-Home Office publication (EN11) volunteers can work as well in the following organisations: Restorative Justice, Victim/Offender Mediation/, Family Group meeting, Reparation, Victims Support, Probation (Mentoring, Education, Probation Board), Prison Visitors’ Centres, the Youth Justice System (Mentoring, youth offender panel) or in Policing (Independent Custody Visitor, special Constables, neighbourhood watch).

The West Midland Criminal Justice Board (EN12) specifies the same activities in their paper dated 5/2007 “Volunteer to help beat crime”. Also “What can I do?” by “Rethinking Crime and Punishment” (EN12A).

Under “Useful Organisations” in the “The “Prisoners’ Information Book” some 40 Associations connected with prison life are mentioned (EN13), such as:

- Action for Prisoners’ Families – a national federation of services supporting prisoners’ families and the setting up of Prison Visitors’ Centres,
- Caring for ex-offenders – organisation which developed out of the “Alpha for Prison” faith-based courses.
- Circles of support and accountability – Voluntary group which works with sex offenders to prevent re-offending.

- Inside Out Trust – Prisoners learn skills within the restorative justice principles. Prison projects with community groups.
- Mothers' Union – Christian organisation which looks after the well-being of Families. 1000 members working in 80 prisons.
- SOVA – local volunteering, mentoring in probation, work in day centres and hostels with ex-prisoners,
- ADFAM NATIONAL - Charity, drug/alcohol abusers helpline and support. Works with courts, police, probation services, parents, visitors' centres,
- Body Positive – HIV information and therapies, free newsletter, helpline, hospital visitors' group,
- Creative and supportive Trust – education and support for women in prison and ex-offenders, prison visiting and after-care of psychiatric and drug problems,
- Female Prisoners Welfare (Hibiscus) – help foreign and British women in 8 prisons,
- From Dependency 2 Work – drug/alcohol addicts go through a training/education program and obtain a job, personal mentoring, active in 12 inner London boroughs,
- Gamblers Anonymous – against compulsive gambling,
- Inquest – Legal advice in case of a death in prison
- MIND – 238 local associations, mental distress and disorder
- Prison Phoenix Trust, Oxford teaches meditation and Yoga,
- Stoneham Housing Association – Largest provider of housing for ex-offenders (men and women).
- AVID – Immigration, foreigners to be returned to their country of origin,
- The HANSLAR Visitors Group – visits immigration detainees,
- Dover Detainee Visitor Group – Anglican, immigration
- New Bridge Foundation – 230 volunteers visit mainly long-term prisoners in 100 prisons who have no more family contacts. Works with the Employment Service and in partnership with Probation. Training in 20 prisons. Prepares detainees for release.
- Prisoners' Families and Friends – advises anyone who has a relative or friend in jail and how to keep in contact with him,
- Prison Link – works mainly for black prisoners in prison, legal advice, pre-release scheme, befriending
- Outside Chance – hard-hitting pre-release programs for young offenders, volunteers visit incarcerated young people, London area,
- Prison Reform Trust – works for better conditions in prisons, alternative sentences and registers complaints of ill-treatment, very active,
- Release – advice for drug users,
- SOFA (serious offenders families Association), support of the offender and the families during trial and until final release,
- Women in Prison – volunteers visit incarcerated women, practical help, this association runs the Holloway Remand Scheme, education, training
- Women's link – Housing, privately run, confidential accommodations,
- YMCA Partnerships in Prison – works with young people in custody and after release, 160 local associations, facilitates resettlement after release.

Under “National Support Agencies” (EN14), 52 organisations on 15 pages are indicated which work inside and outside prisons, such as

- APEX TRUST – helps former detainees to find work, training
- Black Prisoner Support – help for coloured people in the Manchester area, employment, education, drugs, alcohol prevention and cure,
- Business in Prison – prepares detainees for a self-employed career after they leave prison,
- Howard League for Penal Reform – works for more humanity in the justice system with an impressive up-to-date information service and library.

The “Prison Reform Organisation” publishes a list of public organisations and NGO’s working in and outside prison for the detainees (EN15), such as

- BLUE DOOR – Discussion on-line about penal problems and re-insertion,
- “Changing lives through literature” – read and discuss to change your life,
- “Criminon” – Re-socialisation according to Mr. Hubbard (Scientology),
- “Fine Cell work” – the detainees learn how to knit and embroider and the organisation sells the finished products outside prison, 37 volunteers worked in 22 prisons with 290 detainees in 2006,
- “No more prison” is against imprisonment on principle and advocates alternative measures (the liberal MP Mark Houten is part of this movement. “Abolish prisons”)
- “Out-side-in” – help for homosexual prisoners
- “Prison! Me? No way” – youth prevention in 2000 schools and 1800 youth clubs which involved more than 4 million people in sensitive areas to save them from criminality, etc, etc.

Miscellaneous Organisations – (there are about 50 on the website of British-Prisons.co.uk – EN16):

- Goldsmiths College Students are trained and act as prison volunteers (EN17),
- CLINKS is an umbrella organisation which maintains a database of voluntary and community-based organisations working with offenders and their families (EN18) within the newly created National Offender Management Service (NOMS). These organisations are covered by Prison Service Order 4190.
- POPS (Partners of Prisoners and Family Support Groups) was founded in 1988 and supports 250.000 family members per year with a staff of 100 and 30 volunteers. It is active mainly in Family Visitor’s Centres and maintains a helpline for families. Advisory capacity to NOMS and other Institutions (EN19). “Impact” is a large-scale project looking into the reasons for discrimination in the employment of black offenders. NOMS recently sponsored for 3 years the “Community Family Link Project” in the Manchester area which is basically the rehabilitation of offenders and their families without relapsing into crime.
- NEPACS (North Eastern Prison After Care Society) is financed by the Diana Memorial Fund for the help of young people with a key family member in prison, Prison Visiting Centres,
- PRISONERS’ FAMILIES HELPLINE works for more than 200 associations and offers information and guidance about prisons, services and local support groups in the area.
- NACRO (changing lives, reducing crime) works for the prevention of crime which gives work to 60.000 people in 200 projects with the help of 800 volunteers (EN20). Resettlement information before and after release, housing projects, training centres.

- NIACRO (Northern Ireland Care and Resettlement of Offenders) is the central volunteer organisation working in all Northern Ireland prisons.
- PRAXIS works towards more social justice and human rights for the South American community in London. The volunteers of “VAMOS JUNTOS” provide moral support to Spanish speaking prisoners.
- Christopher Morgan’s “Shannon Trust” (EN21) has developed the “toe by toe reading plan” which is taught exclusively by volunteers and literate prisoners to fellow inmates in most UK and Irish prisons. 38 % of the UK prisoners are unable to read and further 29 % have only limited reading skills. In a 4 to 6 months’ course they learn literacy skills which are essential for integration in society and a decent job. Another UK enquiry on 15 to 17 year old males says that 57 % have serious writing difficulties, 43 % problems with expressing themselves orally and 38 % phonological deficiencies.
- HM Prison Service list 10 more organisations under “Education and Training”, such as Action Acton, Prisoner Education Trust, Safe Grounds, etc. EN22)

The “Mentoring and Befriending Foundation” (EN23) is a government-sponsored initiative for more voluntary engagement of the population, including in prisons. The foundation wants to introduce an “Approved Provider Standard”, a kind of minimum qualification for the role as a “mentor or social counsellor”. Critics see this movement as a more economically motivated initiative to alleviate the state budget for health, old age, mental institutions, prisoners, etc. The Prison Visitors of the NAOPV are in quite a different position as their contact with the prisoner is humanitarian only without any direct impact on rehabilitation or re-offending.

NOMS stands for the newly created “National Offender Management Service” and coordinates the organisations involved in prisoners’ after-care which come from the public, private, voluntary, faith and community sector and uses even offenders as volunteers. England/Wales is subdivided in 9 regions around 7 “pathways” or areas of concern. The aim of NOMS is to “protect the public and reduce re-offending significantly by 2010” (EN24). The lavish 40-page consultation document “Volunteers can: Towards a Volunteering Strategy to Reduce Re-Offending” of 5/2007 (EN24A) is probably the most complete action plan proposed in Western Europe in the centre of which is the strongly motivated, free-of charge volunteer who works on all levels to prevent offenders to fall back into delinquency. Critics predict that this “bureaucratic superstructure” will do little for the reduction of the prison population and re-offending, because it does not deal either with the roots of crime or the purpose of sentencing and incarceration. The introduction of the private sector in probation and the government’s dissatisfaction with the prison administration is seen by many as a proof of the erroneous British penal policy for decades. The “Independent Custody Visiting Association – ICVA” (founded in 1984) is an association of volunteers who visit police stations to verify that the rights of the detainees are respected: essentially the right of immediate assistance by a lawyer, the information of the family that the arrest has taken place and that the police have documented the detention. Police stations are places of much verbal and physical violence in the heat of a detention. The conformity of procedure (a kind of quality assurance activity) with the law is all the more important. The volunteers normally do not get involved in individual cases, such as registering personal complaints, recommending an individual lawyer or conveying messages from the detained person to the family or the employer. The ICVA is working as well in Eastern Europe and Africa (EN25).

PRISON VISITORS CENTRES (EN26) – There are about 160 in England/Wales. About half of them are run by 300 volunteers. They normally help establishing the planning of visits by families and friend, organize their transport (and the allocation of free transport), make the reception hall more friendly, offer food and refreshments and help families to cope with both the administration and their emotions when they meet the detainees.

These centres are strongly recommended by the “Auditor General” for maintaining family ties. The rules of the “Family Visiting Scheme” are clearly established (EN27) and the co-ordinating associations known (example: Prison Advice and Care Trust). On July 25th 2002, a debate took place in the House of Lords (EN28) which reflected well the hopes and realities of such centres: a prisoner in contact with his family is 6 times less likely to re-offend; only 40 % of the prisons had such centres at the time, most families have to travel more than 50 miles to see the prisoner, 45 % of the detainees lose contact with their families during detention, 125.000 children are affected by the imprisonment of a parent. The government counts on the voluntary sector to organise these centres. The associations involved are the Mothers’ Union, the Bourne Trust, POPS, Assisted Prison Visits Unit, etc). The “Prison Advice and Care Trust – PACT” runs the Pentonville Visitor Centre and the play area for visiting children (EN29). Document (En29A) enumerates the visiting conditions (how often, what to do, who can help, transport facilities, reimbursed transport fees, etc).

The “National Association of Official Prison Visitors – NAOPV” is very similar to the French ANVP both in size, functioning and principles (“listening”, “the gift of humanity and friendship”, non-confessional, paying membership, periodic meetings with the prison administration, criteria for the selection of members, etc). Their brochures “Notes for Guidance of Prison Visitors”, “a Definitive Document on Prison Visiting” and their website (www.naopv.com), together with the “Handbook for Official Prison Visitors” published by the Ministry of Justice (EN30/31/32) are very complete. There are a few differences in how the English NAOPV and volunteers in other countries operate:

- a) The English prison visitor cannot intervene in favour of the detainee and his family without previous agreement by the administration. In other countries this is rather a “grey” area.
- b) Where feasible, the “Official Prison Visitor – OPV” can talk with the prisoner on his “wing” or, less frequently, in his cell. In France, such meetings take place exclusively in the Lawyers’ parlour. However, in some prisons, operational systems or the architecture of the prison force volunteer visiting to take place in the same room and at the same time as family visits. Usually, provision is made in the Visits room for the “Official Prison Visitors” to meet his/her prisoner. The NAOPV prefers wing-visits for a variety of reasons which are described in their publications. Time for visits varies from one prison to another, but is generally between one and a half and two hours per session.
- c) Travelling expenses are reimbursed by the prison administration to the Volunteer Prison Visitor, whereas in France these expenses may be taken into account only on the occasion of the “Annual Income Tax Declaration”. The NAOPV has no official office and only the General Secretary is remunerated.

The NAOPV has published a one-page note for the recruitment of candidates for prison visiting (EN33) and a most attractive, multicoloured poster which invites prisoners to seek contact with a prison visitor (EN34). The NAOPV has also begun to implement an Information Pack for prisons which includes all documentation relevant

to Official prison visiting which is available through the Regional Secretaries' Co-ordinator.

In "Prison Service Order 4410", sent out by the Ministry of Justice, the "Official Prison Visiting Scheme" (EN35) defines the roles of the Governors/Directors of Prisons, the Liaison Officer, the Official Prison Visitor and the NAOPV. This "Service Order", covers all groups who visit prisons, other than those covered by PSO 4190 (who are under the CLINKS umbrella).

"Official Prison Visitors" are unique in that they are appointed by the Ministry of Justice through the Governor/Director of the prison and together with the "Independent Monitoring Board" are the only voluntary group who work exclusively within the prison walls. OPVs and the members of the Independent Monitoring Board are also the only volunteers who are exempt from signing "Service Level Agreements" with the prison where they operate.

"Reducing Prisoner Re-offending" (EN36) is a report of 2002 by the Auditor General which tries to evaluate the cost of re-offending and the financial means to fight it. One of the conclusions is for example that, in addition to the general offer of services by the prison administration and the volunteers, the individual needs of every detainee ought to be determined on arrival in prison in order to achieve a more successful re-insertion into life later. Some figures:

- 80 % of the detainees admitted that they had taken drugs the year before incarceration,
- 50 % of the prisons offer intensive detoxification measures which cost from £ 2000 to £ 7000; whereas professional training in the open prison service costs between £ 89,- and £ 1493,- per person,
- 76 % of the detainees had followed in prison elementary school courses and reached level "one" (the equivalent of a child of 11 years),
- Starting in 1999, the government spent an additional £ 155.000.000 over 3 years for the intensification of all measures helpful to reduce re-offending. Nevertheless, the rate of re-offending has increased steadily in the last 10 years.
- 50 % of all ex-detainees found work not later than 1 month after leave,
- The average total cost per legal case is £ 30.000,- and the yearly cost per detainee £ 22.000,-.

"Investing in family ties" (EN37) of 10/2005 has the same financial approach to recidivism and sees the most efficient means of improvement chiefly through the maintenance of family ties:

- The average total cost per re-offender is £ 110.000,-,
- 45 % of the prisoners lose contact with their family after the first year of incarceration (family visits have regressed by 40 % in 4 years),
- Considering various factors, the study draws the conclusion that keeping family ties intact reduces re-offending by 50% and return to prison by 26%,
- Therefore, the creation and good running of the "Prison Visitors Centres" is all important. 50 % of them are organized by charitable organisations. The average cost per centre (including the negligible expenses for voluntary staff) is £ 40.000 per year,
- A hypothetical calculation shows that, if only 6 re-offenders could be avoided per prison thanks to the more frequent family visits, the cost efficiency on investment would be 1454 % (!).

“Rethinking Crime and Punishment” by the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation published in 2004, is a 75-page study (EN38) on the English prison situation. A few details:

- the number of women in prison has tripled since 1995. 50 % are mothers, 40 % received treatment for mental health problems before imprisonment,
- the short sentences of up to 6 months has tripled in 10 years,
- the annual cost for a prisoner is £ 37.500 (Euro 55.500) and £ 42.000 for a young offender. Whatever this figure may contain, the comparable cost for probation is £ 3000 and for community service £ 2000. Creating an additional prison place costs £ 100.000 (12.000 new prison places have been created in the last 10 years – partly by the private sector),
- Judges sent 64 % of offenders to prison compared with 43 % in 1990. Average sentence length has gone up because, according to the Lord Chief Justice, more pressure is coming from the public, the media, and the parliament.
- 75 % of the young offenders in prison have not attended school beyond the age of 13 years. 84 % of the 14-16 year-olds re-offend within 2 year of whom 60 % go back to jail. Within the last 5 years the proportion of young people in Prison has increased by 66 % (11.000). 50 % of the young males under 21 had a diagnosable mental disorder, 25 % are fathers, 40 % of the young female prisoners are mothers. 40 % of the young men and 27 % of the young women have been in care during their childhood compared with 2 % of the general population.

“Rethinking crime and punishment” attempts to raise the public debate on criminal and penal problems through conferences, studies and the publication of books.

The 830-page “Prison Handbook 2007” gives all details on the English prison system. The “Prison Reform Trust” together with the Prison Services have published the “Prisoner Information Book for Women and Young Offenders” (En38A) and a separate one for male inmates, “Visiting and keeping in touch” (En38B). All essential information (do’s and don’ts) which inmates ought to know about their new environment, is contained in these booklets.

The 15500 “Samaritans” (EN39) of the Anglican Church (founded around 1950 by Chad Varah) receive 5 Million phone calls per year from people in despair and run a 24 hour telephone service for detainees with the specific aim of preventing suicides.

The “listener scheme” or “peer support” is a mutual aid program (care and support to each other) in place in virtually all prisons in the UK and Ireland (203 contacts). Specific prisoners are selected by staff and trained by the Samaritans to act as a kind of “prisoner/Samaritan” with weekly confidential support meetings to detect suicide-prone inmates and deal with them in time. “Befrienders Worldwide” operates on the same principle in 40 countries.

The Samaritans are also one-to-one voluntary prison visitors. Somewhat as Caritas for the Catholic Church, the Samaritans work through charities wherever the Church of England is active (including the Commonwealth).

What is the efficiency of such an “anti-suicide service”? The European statistics (EN40) indicate the suicide rates per 100.000 prisoners: Scotland 12,0, Northern Ireland 25,3, England 12,3, versus for example Italy 10, Denmark 16,8, France 20,9, Germany 10,1, Netherlands 7,1, Spain 6,5, Sweden 11,8 and Switzerland 15,2. The suicide rate was up in 2007 by 37%. Overcrowding of the prisons is generally blamed, although the responsible minister said that “shared cells help reduce self-harm”.

In an interview on BBC on Jan 7th 2007, Dr Peter Selby, Bishop of Worcester and responsible for prison matters within the Anglican Church, severely criticised the penal

policy of the government. According to him, 70 % (!) of all prisoners have one or more recognizable psychological or health problems and should not be incarcerated in general prisons. He said that the high re-offending rate is mainly due to chronic unemployment, inadequate housing, lack of professional training and the disheartening recognition that the re-socialisation of ex-detainees after long prison sentences is very difficult. But the judges incarcerate people without discernment.

2/2007 – According to the then UK Home Secretary, Mr. Reid, the present probation system (which dealt with 162.000 clients in 2005) does not produce the expected results with regard to the improvement of the re-offending rates. Consequently, up to 10 % of the total budget for probation will go in future to the private and voluntary sector, with the aim of reducing the present re-offending rate of over 60 % (53 % according to the Unions) by at least 10 % in 2010. This measure is the consequence of the 0,4 % cases of serious re-offending of the 178.000 convicted people with a suspended sentence and living under probation (the 99,6 % of “successful” probation cases were conveniently forgotten by the tabloid press). There are 5700 life convicts in English prisons which is more than all other Western European countries together. According to the Unions, re-offending of individuals living under probation was 13 % lower compared with those who had been incarcerated.

When England discovered in July 2006 that young and educated British-born people of Pakistani origin were at the origin of the London Underground massacre and also attempted to down 10 aircraft; when Scotland Yard released the information that about 2500 mainly young Muslims were ready to commit terrorist attacks, the politicians and the media had to concede that they knew nothing about the degree of frustration of their Muslim citizens of South-Asian origin. An enquiry published on 29.1.07 among 16 to 24 year old “Asians” (EN41) tells us that

- 10 % believe that faith is the most important thing in their lives,
- 35 % would prefer to send their children to Islamic schools,
- 37 % would prefer to live under the law of the Sharia (but modernized!),
- 7 % admire radical organisations such as Al-Qaida for fighting against the West,
- 70 % would prefer their wives and girl friends to wear the veil,
- 48 % think that British society offers strong cultural and moral values, but 45 % think the contrary,
- 80 % do not agree with the foreign policy of the UK government.
- A large majority says, however, to combat extremism, British society should tackle first the REAL problems: work, education, housing, racial discrimination.

The official police procedure named “stop and search” (EN42) seems to hit mainly coloured people (as it seems to be the case all over Europe). The Home Office has tried to improve race relations (EN43) for many years, but must have ignored certain evident facts related to racism and its repercussions on everyone.

The website “muslimyouth.net” (EN44) organises “Prison Campaigns” every year which reflects the latent racial unease of the young 2nd and 3rd generation Muslims. They present 3 % of the total population in GB, but more than 10 % of the prison inmates. Their public image, the position of the Imams and prison visiting have become even more difficult with the growing fear of Islamic fundamentalism (kindled by the tabloid press).

Per the BBC, in May 2008, 5 Muslims committed suicide in the Whitemore prison. The authorities fear nation-wide riots. The prison officers’ association sees as the only solution

the “breaking up these Muslim gangs”, but feels helpless in view of the overcrowded prisons, the lack of linguistic skills and understanding the Muslim culture. No mentioning of the fact that civil society could possibly help.

The feedback report on “issues for foreign national prisoners” of the “National Body of Black Prisoners Support Groups” of 1/2005 (EN45) arrives at the conclusion that their work is difficult because of lack of direction by the Government for working with foreign nationals, insufficient translated information, arbitrary detention under the Immigration Act, etc.

An “Oxford Higher Education” paper (Sentencing and Punishment) of late 2006 reports about recent developments (EN47):

- The Prison Service had met the 6 % “Key Performance Indicator Target” for the number of escapes, basic skills teaching, resettlement, accommodation on release, number of inmates completing the Offender Behaviour Program, self-inflicted deaths, positive results of mandatory drug testing and overcrowding. However, the Service had achieved only an average of 5,7 % for the completion of sex offender treatment programs, assault and the employment of ethnic minority staff. Cost per prison place £ 28.486,-.
- The Offender Management Bill (OMS) has given more power to prison staff. For the improvement of the Prison and Probation Services, the government encourages “Public Value Partnerships” with the private and voluntary sector. Under-performing Prison and Probation Boards will be more easily challenged in future.
- The Prison Trust presented a report which is highly critical of “using prisons to warehouse the mentally ill”,
- 8000 new prison places (including on ships) will be built “to protect the public and further rebalance the criminal justice system in favour of the law-abiding majority”.

“Donovan’s view” publishes an interview (EN48) with Lord David Ramsbottom of Kensington which sheds a light on the prison situation around 2001 when he was the “Chief inspector of Prisons” and when the prison population was 66.000 instead of 82.000 today. A few extracts:

- Overcrowding was already a problem when the annual capital funding was reduced by the government from £ 300 Million down to £ 90 Million.
- One of his aims at the time was “to allow the weakest prisoner to feel safe, be encouraged to improve himself, maintain family ties and prepare properly for release”,
- He said to the “public who wanted revenge that only 26 out of the 66.000 prisoners would remain incarcerated forever. If one treats the others like animals, they will fall back into criminality when they come out – and most of them will”.
- Spending a “purposeful and active day” for a detainee means “tackling educational, behavioural and health shortcomings, but only 2500 (re-socialisation) places were provided with no clear indication of their usefulness”.
- Mandatory testing for substance abuse of 10 % only of the incoming prisoners seems somehow irrelevant, if 60 % of them were found to be injected with heroin. “All incoming prisoners need to be tested with appropriate procedures to keep prisons drug-free”.

- “Mental health should be brought under the “National Health Service –NHS”. He then repeated the “National Statistics” which indicate that 70 % of the prison population had some form of personality disorder. In addition, he indicated that out of the 2500 dangerous, severely disordered people 700 lived freely in the community and 400 in special hospitals, but 1400 in prisons, a situation for which staff was not adequately trained.
- he then addressed the lack of work opportunities, the limited “association/get together- time” per day and the importance of the Chaplaincies.

Father Patrick Cope, a priest and active for 10 years within the “Young Offender Monitoring Project”, then made basic statements which seem to be common among visitors to prisons everywhere (he visits young people 6 months before release on a one-to-one basis and accompanies them for one year after release): He said:

- That prison is not the right place for youngsters, because it reinforces their anti-authority/anti-society attitude,
- Whereas the Government kept its promise “to get tough on crime”, it failed in what it had promised to do, to “get also tough on the causes of crime”,
- Prison compounds the problems for the young inmates. Therefore, they come out no different, possibly even worse than when they went in,
- To survive in prison, mainly because of bullying, the young people have to become tougher/more aggressive to resist hardened criminals and are often punished for it by the staff. Many young people are introduced to drugs in prison,
- Without the involvement of more volunteers, the community on all levels and better training for the prison officers, he sees little improvement possible in future.

What has really changed in 2008 with regard to the situation in 2001, as stated above?