

**Exploring the role of the library in the  
learning experiences of people in prison:  
Insights from Northern Ireland and Scotland**

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I confirm that the word count of this thesis is less than 100,000 words.

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## Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to better understand prisoners' experiences of engaging with library services and to examine the relationship between library services and education provision in prisons. It uses a framework informed by desistance research, informal learning theories and critical librarianship to examine prisoners' experiences and the potential impact of engaging with library services.

The study takes a two-phased approach to meeting the research aims. The first phase of the study focuses on staff perspectives of prison library provision and offers a contemporary overview of prison library services across the UK and Ireland. Data is collected through a questionnaire administered to prison library staff, and through follow-up interviews with a subset of these respondents. The second phase of research consists of two case studies carried out in prison sites in Northern Ireland (Hydebank Secure College and Women's Prison) and in Scotland (HMP Barlinnie). Each case study takes a multi-method qualitative approach to examine prisoners' engagement with the library space, resources and informal learning programmes within the context of the wider prison environment.

Findings show that a well-managed prison library offers a positive social learning environment which enables individuals to voluntarily engage in a variety of learning experiences. It is a space which encourages both autonomy and intellectual freedom, as well as providing a temporary escape from the prison regime. Findings also show differing levels of collaboration between the library and the wider education department across prison sites. This research postulates that stronger liaison between library and education staff can improve the overall learning experiences of people in prison. The study also argues for wider inclusion of library services within contemporary research and policy discussions on prison education.

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## Abbreviations

CILIP	Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (The Library and Information Association, UK)
CJINI	Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland
DOJNI	The Department of Justice, Northern Ireland
HMPPS	Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service
IFLA	International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
IMB	Independent Monitoring Board
IPS	Irish Prison Service
LIS	Library and Information Science
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
NIPS	Northern Ireland Prison Service
SPS	Scottish Prison Service
PRT	Prison Review Team
YOC	Young Offenders Centre

## Chapter One: Introduction

### 1.1 Research focus and rationale

*“Every prison shall have a library for the use of all categories of prisoners, adequately stocked with both recreational and instructional books, and prisoners shall be encouraged to make full use of it.”* (United Nations, 2015)

The right for all prisoners to have access to a library is outlined above in the *Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, The Nelson Mandela Rules (Rule 64)*. Prison libraries act as a gateway to information in an information poor environment (Chatman, 1996; Drabinski and Rabina, 2015). Similar to a public library, they also offer a recreational space for library users and a range of resources which facilitate reading for pleasure, self-directed learning or simply a way of passing time during incarceration. In their educational role, they both support formal education within the prison and offer a range of informal learning opportunities for prisoners (Council of Europe, 1990). While there are many publications detailing the history and development of prison library services across the world (see Stevens and Usherwood, 1995; Vogel, 2009; Conrad, 2016), little empirical research has been carried out on how prisoners engage with these services or the impact it can have on their lives. This study seeks to address this gap in knowledge by exploring prisoners’ engagement with the space, resources and informal learning opportunities offered by prison libraries across different jurisdictions in the United Kingdom (UK). It also considers the level of collaboration between library staff and education staff in prisons and the implications of this relationship for the broader learning experiences of prisoners.

This study was born out of a previous research project on family literacy programmes in correctional facilities, which highlighted the often undervalued role of prison libraries and the range of services they provide (Finlay, 2014). Further investigation of existing literature revealed that most prison library research is descriptive in nature, detailing the way in which libraries are managed and describing the range of resources

and literacy programmes they offer. There exist many evaluations of individual programmes which take place in the library space, such as reading groups (see Robinson and Billington, 2012; Prison Reading Groups, 2013; National Literacy Trust, 2019) or peer literacy schemes run in collaboration with external organisations (see Hopkins and Kendall, 2015), but little comprehensive research has been carried out on prisoners' perceptions and experiences of the library space and its services as a whole. This study aims to contribute to the small body of evidence on prisoners' engagement with the services offered by prison libraries. It also takes seriously Stearns' (2004) critique of existing research for lacking any philosophical or criminological foundations. The study therefore takes an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on relevant theories and research from prison sociology and prison education research to better understand the context in which these services are offered and ultimately to strengthen the credibility of any claims made about the value of prison library services. The research design and analysis of findings has been guided by a theoretical framework which draws on contemporary theories of desistance, informal learning theories and critical librarianship.

In their research on the place of the prison library in the rehabilitation process, Stevens and Usherwood (1995) outline the various roles played by the library which have so often changed in line with shifting penal ideologies. They discuss library services which provided literature for the "moral betterment" of prisoners (p.50), services which offered bibliotherapy as part of a treatment model in prisons and the more holistic models which followed which aimed to support rehabilitation and re-integration. Their work is significant in highlighting many of the ways a library can help to support the rehabilitation process and in showing the importance of prison library services being "fully co-ordinated with the strategies of all other agencies in the prison" (p.60). Their work also underlines the existing tension between providing public library services to people in prison while at the same time contributing to the prison agenda, which often conflicts with the ethics and principles of librarianship. This current project carries on this conversation during another turn in prison policy and research, which moves away from a rehabilitation model to one of supporting desistance. Whereas rehabilitation focuses "distinctly on the effectiveness of

‘programmes’ or institutions in generating change” (Maruna, 2017, p.8), desistance research focuses less on programmes and more on the narratives of individuals and understanding the processes of change which take place in the lives of those who desist from crime. Maruna and Mann (2019, p.6) underline this difference when they write,

“Recognising the individual as the agent of change, desistance research explores individuals’ social contexts, embedded social networks and subjective interpretations as keys to understanding long term life change.”

A more detailed explanation and discussion of desistance theories and desistance research can be found in section 2.3. Rather than suggesting that prison library services adapt once more to align with the desistance paradigm, this study begins with the supposition that the principles and values long embedded within the wider library profession are already aligned with this contemporary approach of supporting people in prison. It is therefore an opportune moment to carry out research in this field, as desistance literature offers an appropriate language and framework by which to explore the value of library services.

This is also a timely study within the context of prison education research. There is a growing body of research in the UK and Ireland which explores the purpose of prison education and how learning helps to support the personal development and desistance of people in prison (see Champion and Noble, 2016; Szifris, 2018; Szifris et al., 2018). Where prison education policy was once concerned with developing basic literacy and numeracy skills in order to gain qualifications and increase chances of employment on release, it is beginning to take a more holistic view of the purpose and strengths of education. The emergence of a desistance paradigm which is being used to inform prison policy and practice means that concepts such as change and personal development, which have long been core to pedagogical principles, are finally being taken seriously by prison policymakers and recognised as being central to the process of desistance from crime. This broader and more holistic view of prison education places greater value on non-compulsory and non-accredited informal learning

opportunities in prison (Behan, 2014; Warr, 2016). This thesis explores the self-directed and informal learning opportunities facilitated by the library and the ways in which prison education researchers and practitioners can learn from the distinct learning practices which take place in the library space. It is hoped therefore that the findings of this study will contribute not only to the field of library and information research but also to the burgeoning field of prison education research and encourage future collaboration between library and education researchers and practitioners.

This thesis also draws on the work of prison sociologists to build necessary insights into the social climate of prisons and the experience of incarceration. Both Sykes (1958) and Clemmer (1958) provide a foundational understanding of the challenges inherent in prison life and the methods adopted by prisoners to cope with the “pains of imprisonment” (Sykes, 1958). Crewe’s in-depth study of a medium security men’s prison in England aimed “to expose and dissect the prison’s social anatomy” (Crewe, 2009, p.3) and is helpful in portraying life inside a modern day prison. Liebling’s research on the moral performance of prisons (Liebling, assisted by Arnold, 2004; Liebling, 2011) and survival in prison (1992) has also been used to inform understanding of the prison setting and the experiences of prisoners. These depictions of the deprivations and challenges caused by incarceration are crucial to understanding the context in which library services are delivered and what the library space, resources and informal learning programmes might mean for those who use them. Familiarity with prison sociology literature also aided reflection of the research experience, particularly during the case study phase of research.

The case studies presented in this study focus on prison sites in the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) and the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) respectively, two prison services whose recent organisational changes have been informed by desistance research. This allows for the study of library provision in what aim to be desistance-supporting prison regimes. It also provides an insight into library provision in previously unexamined prison sites. Existing UK-based prison library research focuses on prisons in England and Wales (Stevens, 1995; Field, 2008). This study therefore

addresses both an empirical and theoretical gap in prison library research as well as furthering knowledge of local and global prison library provision.

## 1.2 Research aim and questions

This research aims to provide insight into current prison library provision across the UK and Ireland and then to investigate the experiences of prison library users in specific contexts, using an interdisciplinary theoretical framework to aid understanding of these experiences. Taking a case study approach, the research considers how the wider prison regime and environment impacts upon the provision of and engagement with library services. In exploring library engagement, the study also looks at the level of liaison between library services and education providers across prison sites and the implications of this relationship for prisoners' experiences of learning. The research is underpinned by the following primary research questions:

1. How might theories of desistance help us to better understand the outcomes of engaging with prison library services?
2. What role does the library play in the learning experiences of people in prison?

With these guiding questions in mind, the research is designed to address the following secondary research questions:

- How have recent policy changes impacted upon the provision of prison library services in Northern Ireland and Scotland?
- How do staff members perceive the role and value of prison library services?
- How do prisoners perceive the role and value of prison library services?
- What informal learning opportunities are offered by the prison library?
- How does the relationship between the library and education department impact upon a prisoner's experience of learning?

The construction of these research questions and the approach taken to subsequent data collection and analysis is presented in detail in Chapter Three, which explores the research design and methodology. The research methods employed centred around a focused review of relevant research literature and prison library policy, a survey of prison library staff across the UK and Ireland, and case studies at two prison sites.

### 1.2.3 Conducting research in a failing institution

*“A major challenge of this movement is to do the work that will create more human, habitable environments for people in prison without bolstering the permanence of the prison system.” (Davis, 2003, p.100)*

It should be noted right from the outset that this research project in no way endorses the highly contested notion that “prison works”, a statement key to the political campaign of the UK Labour Party in the 1990s and one which has strongly shaped modern day penal strategies and policies. The study that follows is more in line with the widely accepted view across criminology and sociology that prison “almost invariably damages people” (Warner, 2014, p.2) and that the institution stands as a barrier to the rehabilitation it seeks to provide. Arguing from an abolitionist point of view, Scott (2017, p.36) describes prisons as being “uniquely designed and operationalised through deliberate pain infliction.” The point is later made, when discussing the influence of desistance research on prison policy, that a desistance-supporting prison may indeed be an oxymoron (McNeill, 2011) as opportunities for individual agency, for building social capital and for developing a pro-social identity – all of which are considered to be central to the desistance process – are inherently limited by the very nature of incarceration. Even education and library services which seek to provide these opportunities cannot fully overcome the intrinsic obstacles that exist due to a prisoner’s lack of autonomy within prison, and for this reason educational opportunities offered behind bars can never truly reflect those experienced by people outside of prison. Until an alternative to the prison system is realised, it is necessary however to continue to support individuals within a failing institution, and hope to increase the number of people who can find meaning in their



imprisonment and possibly *flourish* instead of *languish* (Liebling, 2012) during their sentence. In his work on asylums, Goffman (1961, p.68), described the total institution as “a kind of dead sea in which little islands of vivid, encapturing activity appear. Such activity can help the individual withstand the psychological stress usually engendered by assaults upon the self.” This research is informed by critical librarianship, a movement where “considerations for the human condition and for human rights take precedence over other professional concerns” (Samek, 2007, p.xxiii). Prison libraries should therefore seek to provide services which help prisoners withstand this psychological stress and to try to combat the controlled and oppressive environment of the prison which stands in direct contrast to the mission of a library.

### 1.3 Setting the scene: Policy context

In order to better comprehend the role and value of prison library services, it is necessary to understand the wider social and political context in which these services are provided. This section begins by considering existing prison library policies and guidelines, both on a global and national scale. It then introduces the Northern Ireland Prison Service and the Scottish Prison Service, offering the contextual setting for the two case studies conducted as part of this research. This includes a general overview of the strategic mission and values of each prison service and a more focused look at their policies related to education and library provision.

#### 1.3.1 Prison library policies and guidelines

Various international standards and policies have made clear that all humans have the right to access information, to practice intellectual freedom and to access free education. Article 19 of the United Nation’s *Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) states that everyone has the right to “freedom of opinion and expression” and to “receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers.” Article 26 later affirms the right of every human to access free education. The *Public Library Manifesto* drafted in collaboration between the United Nations Educational, Scientific

and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) underlines the importance of “equality of access for all” including people in prison (1994, para.6). There is clear global agreement that all people have the right to access library and information services and that this right does not end when a person enters prison.

IFLA’s *Guidelines for Library Services to Prisoners* (Lehmann and Locke, 2005) offers international guidance on various aspects of prison library provision which can be adapted according to local circumstances. This document recognises both the educational and recreational role of the prison library and again emphasises that prisoners have not “relinquished the right to learn and to access information” and that “the prison library should offer materials and services comparable to community libraries in the ‘free’ world” (p.4). It goes on to discuss the level of access granted to prison library users, the resources and equipment held by the library, the services and programmes which should be offered and issues around budgets and staffing. These guidelines suggest that the library should be managed or supervised by a professional librarian with a recognised library and information science qualification. Support for professional staffing is echoed elsewhere (see Forster, 1981; Krolak, 2019) but it is not always implemented in prisons. A survey taken by the UK’s Library and Information Association in 2015 showed that 59% of prison libraries across England and Wales were managed by either a chartered or qualified librarian, and 41% were managed by someone with no librarianship qualification (CILIP, 2015, p.9).

Guidelines on the provision of prison library services are also offered in the Council of Europe’s *Recommendations on Prison Education* (1990). This report affirms that “library services for prisoners must have the same wide range of functions as progressive libraries for the public, and the same professional standards should apply” (p.34). The report outlines the educational function of libraries, which is viewed as being twofold in nature. As well as supporting formal education, the report recognises that “libraries are also an important source of informal education in their own right” (ibid.). It recommends close cooperation between library and teaching staff to promote each of these functions. This educational role of the library and the level of

collaboration between library and education staff becomes a main feature of this research study.

A significant piece of global research was published by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning in 2019 which offers examples of prison library provision across the world and discusses how libraries support the rehabilitation of prisoners. This research is entitled *Books beyond bars: the transformative role of prison libraries* (Krolak, 2019) and offers a comprehensive overview of existing policies and guidelines and considers the extent to which these have been implemented in different jurisdictions. Krolak concludes that libraries have potential in “providing access to education, information, recreation, spiritual development and the improvement of literacy levels among prisoners” and she underlines the lifelong learning culture they can create within the prison (p.42). This is the most recent in-depth piece of internationally recognised research on prison library provision and will likely be used to inform future policy discussions and guidelines. This current doctoral study compliments Krolak’s work by exploring the role of the prison library and offering examples of how services are provided in two further jurisdictions, those of Northern Ireland and Scotland. It also offers a more theoretically informed discussion of the value of these services, supported by the empirical data collected from both prisoners and prison staff.

#### *1.3.1.1 Prison library services in the United Kingdom*

There are three separate criminal justice jurisdictions in the United Kingdom (UK). Prisons in England and Wales are ultimately governed by the UK Home Office and the Ministry of Justice while powers have been devolved to the Scottish Government and the Northern Ireland Assembly to govern their respective justice systems. In offering an overview of the development of prison library policy in the UK, this section focuses on the prison service in England and Wales (HMPPS). Distinct policies for Northern Ireland and Scotland will form part of the broader conversation about their prison policies and organisational strategies in sections 1.3.2.2 and 1.3.3.1 respectively.

There are currently 117 prisons in England and Wales, each of which are mandated to offer a prison library service. According to the Prison Rules of 1999, “A library shall be provided in every prison and, subject to any directions of the Secretary of State, every prisoner shall be allowed to have library books and exchange them” (Rule 33). This was reinforced by a more recent framework published by the Ministry of Justice in 2019 which details the minimum mandatory requirements to provide education and library services in adult prisons. This framework acknowledges that the library should have a “focus on supporting learning, improving literacy and other barriers to resettlement” as well as promoting reading “as a source of pleasure” and providing prisoners with “opportunities for wider cultural engagement” (MOJ, 2019, p.4). Although these documents recognise the legal requirement and purpose of prison libraries, further guidelines are required to lay out exactly what an efficient library service should offer and how these services should be managed in each establishment. These standards were defined for the first time in Home Office Policy Statement Number 7, *Library Facilities for People in Custody* (1978) and later developed alongside the UK’s Library Association to produce *Guidelines for Prison Libraries* (1981 and revised in 1997). These guidelines helped to inform the management and service delivery of prison libraries across England and Wales. In line with these guidelines, most prison libraries in the HMPPS are run under a Service Level Agreement with their local Public Library Authority, which lays out the distribution of responsibilities held by each body to support the running of the prison library service. This kind of dual management of prison library services is explored further in the findings from Phase One of this study (section 4.3.1).

The Library Association has since changed its name to CILIP, the UK’s Library and Information Association. This professional body seeks to support and advocate for staff members across all sectors of the library and information profession. Within the broader organisation is a Prison Libraries Group which advocates for prison library services and for prison library staff. This group offers support and networking opportunities for library staff across the UK, holding a yearly training event in London and offering online written resources such as the *Prison Libraries Training Pack* (CILIP Prison Libraries Group, 2014). The group has also carried out research into prison

library provision and staffing. In 2015, they published *The Big Question*, a survey of prison library staff across England and Wales (CILIP, 2015). Respondents represented 91 of the 117 establishments in HMPSS and the survey provided significant insights into how libraries are being managed and staffed across prison sites. At the time of writing, CILIP is working on an advocacy campaign for prison library services (CILIP Prison Libraries Group, 2019). The figure below shows how CILIP works to support and promote the work of prison libraries:



**Figure 1.** CILIP's advocacy strategy for prison library services (CILIP, 2019)

### 1.3.1.2 Prison library services in Ireland

It was initially planned that this research would include a case study on library service provision in the Irish Prison Service (IPS) as well as in Northern Ireland and Scotland, but access to the IPS was not granted in time to complete the research. The initial questionnaire sent to prison library staff in Phase One of this study did include a respondent from the IPS and so it is relevant to include an overview of prison library provision in this country. There is very little scholarly research or public knowledge of how prison libraries operate in Ireland. The IPS (2019b) notes that a library is available in each prison, and that in general they are provided in collaboration with the relevant local public library authorities. Due to recent budget cuts in public library services, there are currently few prison librarians working in Ireland (McInerney, 2019). The importance of libraries is however recognised by the IPS and the Education and

Training Boards Ireland in their joint *Prison Education Strategy (2019-2022)*, which sets out plans to develop and improve library service provision across institutions. These services will be funded by the prison service who will “liaise with and support the public library service to provide regular access to a wide range of current informational, education and recreational resources” (IPS, 2019a, p.7). It also notes that the Prison Education Service will collaborate with library services and promote their work in each prison (ibid.).

This section has offered an overview of contemporary international and national policies and guidelines concerning prisoners’ access to library and information services. Not only do these documents provide professional standards for library staff, but they also offer information about the range of library services which exist for prisoners across jurisdictions. This research aims to provide further insight into this provision, particularly within Northern Ireland and Scotland. These insights will not only describe what services exist, but also report the ways in which prisoners engage with these services and explore the role and value of the library within the wider context of incarceration.

### 1.3.2 The Northern Ireland Prison Service

The first of the case studies presented in this thesis took place in the library at Hydebank Wood College and Women’s Prison in Northern Ireland. This section offers some background to the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS), including significant reform strategies which have been drawn up and implemented over the past decade and the implications this has had for education and library provision. It first offers a brief overview of prison services during the conflict in Northern Ireland and how operational procedures during this time have shaped current penal policy. There are currently three prison sites across Northern Ireland: HMP Maghaberry, a high security men’s prison; HMP Magilligan, a medium security men’s prison; and Hydebank Wood College and Women’s Prison, a Secure College for young men and the only site for Northern Ireland’s women prisoners. The most recent

statistics show that there are 96 prisoners per 100,000 of the population in Northern Ireland (House of Commons, 2019, p.4).

There is little doubt that the conflict in Northern Ireland has had a lasting legacy on the country's prison system (Irwin; 2003; Scraton, 2015; Butler, 2016). A recent inspection report of HMP Maghaberry notes that this legacy has been a "major impediment" to its progress and to the development of a successful, rehabilitative institution (CJINI, 2016c, p.5). The main controversies during this period of conflict which impacted upon the prison system include the administration of special policing powers during this time, the internment of prisoners without trial, the incarceration and later criminalisation of 'political prisoners' and the eventual early release of these prisoners. When internment began in 1971, the prison population expanded significantly and staff had to adapt quickly to new, strict security-focused regimes that separated 'political' and 'ordinary' prisoners. McEvoy (2001) notes that, at certain times, politically motivated prisoners accounted for between half and two thirds of the overall prison population. The criminalisation of political prisoners led to the well-publicised blanket protests and hunger strikes and was a defining feature of incarceration during this time. Scraton (2015, p.189) notes that policies governing the prison system at this time were "locked into, if not determined by, the containment of politically motivated prisoners." Following the early release of 449 prisoners between 1998-2007 (Dwyer, 2007), the prison system then had to deal with a very different environment and the integration of remaining political prisoners with 'ordinary' criminals. Prison officers had been left with a strongly security-focused mentality. Transition from this culture has been very slow, and there remains widespread malaise and discontent among prison staff stemming from this defining period in Northern Ireland's history (CJINI, 2016c).

The violence experienced during the conflict in Northern Ireland has not only impacted upon prison governance and staffing, but also on the lives of individuals who have since been incarcerated. An inspection report of Hydebank Wood College in 2016 noted the high levels of bullying and violence among the young men held here (CJINI, 2016b). A recent piece of research carried out by Murray (2019) on the needs and

experiences of young men at Hydebank noted the “normalisation of violence” that existed here. Murray notes that the years of conflict had affected these young people and contributed to the large amount of violence and bullying which takes place (p.2). Butler (2016, p.11) also recognises that the resistance strategies used during the conflict “especially the use of violence, intimidation and litigation” continue to shape the behaviour of people imprisoned in Northern Ireland today.

Policing and justice powers were devolved from the UK Parliament to the Northern Ireland Assembly in 2010. At this time, the Minister of Justice appointed a Prison Review Team (PRT) to examine the problems facing the NIPS and to suggest solutions which would help the NIPS transition into a successful, post-conflict prison service. Their interim report published in February 2011 pointed to the lack of leadership across the prison service, the culture of denial and defeatism among staff and the need for change on a deep structural scale (PRT, 2011a). The final report published later that year proposed 40 recommendations to create a more effective prison service (PRT, 2011b). This report, and subsequent strategies drafted by the Department of Justice Northern Ireland (DOJNI), were heavily informed by contemporary desistance research. The final PRT report noted that a good prison system “must be based on the premise that the prisoners within it can develop and change, and must provide opportunities for them to do so” (PRT, 2011b, p.9.) An entire chapter of the report was dedicated to the importance of understanding the desistance process. Acknowledging that desistance is supported by both individual and social factors, the report suggests that “plans and interventions should place the individuals at the centre” and that social capital is “equally important” (p.16). This was emphasised again in the 2015 prison strategy document, *Supporting Change: A Strategic Approach to Desistance*. This approach set out a holistic strategy for change which required “embedding desistance principles in policy and practice across the Northern Ireland criminal justice system” (DOJNI, 2015, p.2). The diagram below shows the factors thought to help individuals desist from crime, as noted in this strategy document:





**Figure 2.** Factors which support desistance (DOJNI, 2015, p.6)

This move toward a desistance-supporting regime is significant for this study. The research design used in this study is also heavily influenced by desistance research and considers the ways in which desistance theory can help to illuminate the value of prison library services. Theories of desistance and their impact on prison-based services is discussed more fully in Chapter Two.

#### *1.3.2.1 Education provision*

The PRT report (2011b) underlined the value of education in prisons and recommended that learning and skills provision within the NIPS be outsourced to external education providers. All three prison sites now outsource their education: HMP Magilligan works in partnership with North West Regional College and HMP Maghaberry and Hydebank work in partnership with Belfast Metropolitan College. Fulfilling Recommendation 40 of the PRT review, Hydebank has transitioned

from a Young Offenders Centre into a Secure College with a clear focus on providing educational opportunities which help to desist from crime. The latest inspection report of Hydebank noted that its change in function had led to “a major shift in the ethos of the institution” (CJINI, 2016b, p.5). Partnership with Belfast Metropolitan College had helped to change Hydebank from a “demotivated and directionless institution” to an institution “with a drive to innovate and improve, with a clear ethos of rehabilitation” (ibid., p.6). Further background to Hydebank and its transition into a Secure College is offered in Chapter Five, which presents the findings of this first case study.

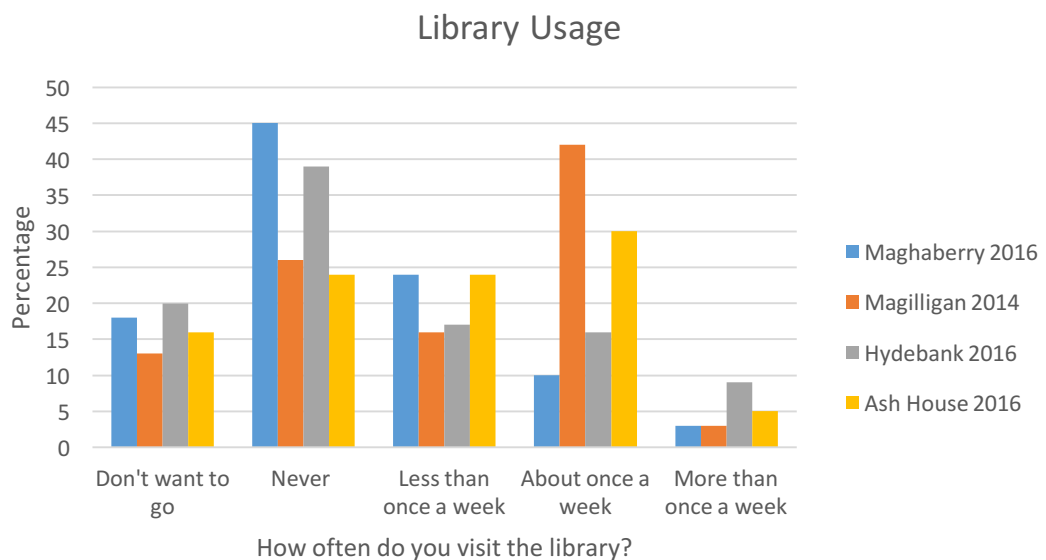
It should be noted that educational and vocational training in the NIPS is largely focused on employability. The NIPS *Learning and Skills Strategic Plan 2010-2013* notes that their aim is “to promote learning leading to externally recognised accreditation” and “to improve prisoners’ potential to gain employment and to promote resettlement in the community” (p.5). Belfast Metropolitan College, who works in partnership with both Hydebank and HMP Maghaberry, have noted that the qualifications they provide are “industry relevant” including subjects such as ICT, hairdressing, hospitality and catering (Seffen, 2018, para. 8). This employability-focused approach to learning stands somewhat in contrast to what desistance research teaches about supporting the education of people in prison. Desistance scholars have criticised policymakers for viewing education as simply “an instrumental mechanism for reducing reoffending” (McNeill, 2014, para.4). McNeill goes on to say that while employability is perhaps the most common link associated with education and desistance, it also the narrowest link (ibid., para.2). Outside of the prison policy arena, there is a much broader and more holistic view of education in prison, including its role in “prisoner empowerment” (Reuss, 1999) and “personal development” (McNeill, 2014; Szifris, 2018). Costelloe (2014, p.30) also argues that “prisoner education should be seen as an end in itself and not just a means to an end.”

### *1.3.2.2 Library provision*

*A library shall be provided in every prison and every prisoner shall be allowed to have books or other items borrowed from the library, and to exchange them,*

*under such conditions as the governor or the Department of Justice may determine.* (Prison and Young Offenders Centre Rules Northern Ireland 1995, Rule 54[1])

As seen in the Prison Rules above, every prisoner in Northern Ireland has a right to access library services and to use the resources provided by the library. The library is rarely mentioned in wider prison strategy documents and is not discussed in the NIPS *Learning and Skills Strategic Plan 2010-2013*. The only publicly available information about these library services can be found in the inspection reports of individual prisons and the annual reports published by the Independent Monitoring Boards for Northern Ireland (IMB). While the level of provision appears to vary across sites, inspection reports outline the range of activities offered in each library, including reader development programmes, author events and mentoring schemes. Further data about library management and provision in Northern Ireland was gathered from prison and public library staff during the first case study and is detailed in Chapter Five.



**Figure 3.** Library visits across NIPS sites, compiled from individual inspection reports

Figure 3 shows data collected in the most recent inspection report of each institution in Northern Ireland (Ash House represents the female prison population held at Hydebank). A representative sample of each population was asked how often they visit

the library. It is clear from this graph that the majority of Northern Ireland's prison population do not visit the prison library often. Library usage appears to be particularly low in both HMP Maghaberry and Hydebank. In HMP Maghaberry, 45% of respondents claimed to never use the library, with a further 18% stating that they do not want to go. Similarly, in Hydebank, 39% of young men never visit the library and 20% do not want to visit. While it is interesting to see how often the library is used in each prison, further data needs to be collected to determine the reasons why prisoners choose to use or not use the library. Aside from those who claimed that they "don't want to go", it would be helpful to learn why others do not, or perhaps cannot, visit the library. It serves to highlight the need for more qualitative research which explores the experiences and perceptions of prisoners regarding prison library services.

### 1.3.3 The Scottish Prison Service

The second case study focuses on library engagement at HMP Barlinnie, an adult men's prison in Glasgow and the largest prison in Scotland. The Scottish Prison Service (SPS) has also undergone significant organisational changes over the past decade, including a revised approach toward education provision and a recent overhaul of library provision across the prison estate. The paragraphs which follow outline some of these changes and their relevance for this study. A more detailed description of HMP Barlinnie is offered alongside the presentation of case study findings in Chapter Six.

There are currently 15 prisons in Scotland, 13 of which are publicly run by the SPS and two of which are operated by private companies. The most recent statistics show that there are 166 prisoners per 100,000 of the population in Scotland (House of Commons, 2019). In an effort to combat the high rates of incarceration and to reduce reoffending rates, the SPS revealed a new organisational strategy in 2013, *Unlocking Potential, Transforming Lives*. The Scottish Parliament also undertook an *Inquiry into Purposeful Activity in Prisons* in 2013 and a new framework for purposeful activity was laid out the following year (SPS, 2014a). Similar to the NIPS, their revised strategic vision has been strongly influenced by scholarly research on desistance from crime. The current Chief Executive of the SPS, Colin McConnell, notes that desistance evidence "is increasingly

being harnessed by the Scottish Prison Service as the lens through which to focus organisational change” (McConnell et al., 2013, p.10). He envisioned a service that would “build on an individual’s strengths and potential” and would thereby empower prisoners “to unlock their potential and transform their lives” (SPS, 2014b, p.3). This organisational strategy was also informed by Liebling’s influential research on the moral quality of prisons (Liebling, assisted by Arnold, 2004; Liebling, 2011) which discussed the treatment of prisoners by prison staff and the significance of interpersonal relationships in prison. There has been a resulting focus in the SPS on developing trusting and respectful staff-prisoner relationships and working with staff to help them understand the principles of desistance research.

This strategic vision, along with the implementation of a revised national education curriculum across Scotland, paved the way for “an ambitious and reinvigorated system of prison education in Scotland” (Sams, 2014, p.197). A large-scale review of education in 2004 led to the development of a Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) which became the nationally recognised curriculum in Scotland in 2010 and was generally viewed as “a landmark development in Scottish education” (Priestley and Humes, 2010, p.346). This new framework underlined the importance of schools facilitating opportunities for individualised learning, collaborative learning, interdisciplinary learning and active citizenship (The Scottish Government, 2008). The *Learning and Skills Strategy 2016-2021* (SPS, 2016) made clear that the contracts with external education providers are founded on the principles of CfE and seek to produce “successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors” (p.6). This strategy also takes a broad view of what it means to be a literate person, understanding that literacies “are complex capabilities which extend beyond the purely functional skills of encoding or decoding text and include the ability to form ideas, express opinions and make decisions in different contexts” (ibid.).

In her analysis of Scottish prison learning contracts, Galloway (2019) contrasts the Scottish adult learning policy to that in England and Wales. She notes that Scotland attaches importance to “contexts and processes of learning rather than the specification of pre-defined content in the form of isolated and decontextualized

literacy skills” (p.70). This is also true of Scotland’s approach to prison education. Galloway notes that the SPS has negotiated with its partnering Further Education colleges over time “so that learning might be better contextualised within experiences and aspirations, with less emphasis on functional and instrumental programmes” (p.68). This focus on the process of learning and individualised experiences aligns with a more holistic, desistance-focused model of education.

This holistic approach to education is perhaps most clearly seen in the project-themed learning that takes place across the Scottish prison estate. When describing this approach, the Head of Learning and Skills for the SPS explains that it “harnesses a range of contemporary issues or historical subjects, as its core theme is to explore key issues of interest (often controversial) which encourages critical and lateral thinking and often aids self-reflection” (King, 2018, para.5). One of the stimuli for this creative approach to learning was a year-long project run by New College Lanarkshire. *Inspiring Change* was an initiative run in five different prisons (including the case study site, HMP Barlinnie) which used a range of arts projects to “stimulate offenders’ engagement with learning, improve literacy skills and demonstrate the potential of the arts to support the process of rehabilitation” (Anderson et al., 2011, p.3). An evaluation of the project revealed numerous benefits of this approach, concluding that arts projects “can play a vital role in enabling prisoners to imagine and embark on the desistance process” (McNeill et al, 2011, p.80). Such a positive evaluation prompted a group of college staff to then develop a guide to project-based learning to be used across all prison sites. This approach to education provision was still being used by Fife College during the fieldwork period at HMP Barlinnie.

In 2017, Fife College was awarded the contract to provide education to all 13 public prisons in Scotland, replacing an old model where this contract was shared between Fife College and North Lanarkshire College. This new model had just been rolled out across the prison service when fieldwork for this project began. Similar to the situation of the Hydebank case study, it meant that the education department at HMP Barlinnie was in a period of transition and there was evident unrest among some staff members.

### 1.3.3.1 Library provision

Despite a new vision for education provision, there was no mention of library services in the revised *Learning and Skills Strategy* (SPS, 2016). Library provision is however addressed in the strategy for delivering Purposeful Activity, published in 2014. This review recognised that library provision varies widely across establishments and that there was “no current standard for library provision within the SPS estate” (SPS, 2014a, p.62). It notes the resulting lack of consistency in library management, the size of library spaces, the range of literacy programmes offered and the level of access to the library in each prison. Prison Rules state that the Governor must establish a lending library but “there is no provision in them for the minimum standard of that resource or expected frequency of visits” (COSLA, 2016, p.2). It was therefore recommended that a comprehensive review of library services be carried out “with a view to identifying best practice and establishing a set of agreed standards for the delivery of library services” (SPS, 2014a, p.62). This review took place in 2015 in conjunction with the Scottish Library and Information Council and confirmed the inconsistency of service provision which was noted in the Purposeful Activity review. New guidance on library services was drawn up which aimed “to ensure that provision within prison libraries is commensurate with library services available in the community” (COSLA, 2016, p.2). Significant developments have since been made in library provision across the prison estate, some of which were observed during the Scottish case study and discussed in Chapter Six.

## 1.4 Structure of thesis

This introductory chapter has presented the rationale and background to this research project, outlining the main research questions and the approach taken to answer these questions. It has argued that this is a timely piece of research whose findings will contribute both to the field of librarianship and of prison education. It also offered a contextual setting for the study, providing an overview of the main global and national prison library policies and guidelines and introducing relevant policies within the

Northern Ireland Prison Service and the Scottish Prison Service. This helps to set the scene for the research findings presented in Chapters Four to Six.

Chapter Two reviews existing literature on prison library services and introduces the theoretical framework for the study. This interdisciplinary framework draws on theories and research from the fields of criminology, education and librarianship and is helpful in both designing the research approach and analysing the research findings. The chapter argues that this framework can help to understand the value of engaging with prison library services and has the potential to serve as a foundation for future prison library research.

Chapter Three details the research design and methods used in this study. It presents the research questions which guided the fieldwork and justifies the use of a qualitative, case study approach to collecting data. It offers a detailed description of data collection methods and the ethical issues associated with conducting research with prisoners. The process of gaining ethical approval for this project and negotiating access to chosen case study sites was not a straightforward process. This chapter discusses some of the challenges faced in gaining access to prison sites, and the implications of these challenges for the research design. The chapter concludes by offering a reflexive account of the research project and discussing the strengths and limitations of the study.

The three chapters that follow detail the findings of the empirical research carried out. Chapter Four presents findings from the first phase of the study, which explored the perspectives of prison library staff on the role and value of library services. Questionnaire findings presented in this chapter also provide an overview of the current level of prison library provision across the UK and Ireland and underline some of the challenges of providing library services in a closed setting. Findings of this initial phase of research also consider the level of communication and collaboration between library and education staff at different prison sites and some of the barriers which prevent effective collaboration.



Findings from the first case study at Hydebank Wood College and Women's Prison are presented in Chapter Five. Some background to Hydebank and its transformation into a Secure College is offered before discussing prisoners' experiences of library engagement. Findings focus strongly on engagement with the library space and the value of staff-prisoner relationships in the library. The library's relationship with the wider education department is also discussed.

Chapter Six discusses the findings of the second case study at HMP Barlinnie in Scotland. This chapter also provides further contextual information about library services and education provision across the SPS before focusing on prisoners' experiences of library engagement at Barlinnie, and the level of liaison between library and education staff at this site.

Full discussion of the findings from the different phases of the research project and how they answer the proposed research questions can be found in Chapter Seven. Conclusions of the research and recommendations for future research, policy and practice are then presented in the final chapter.

## Chapter Two: The role of the prison library

This chapter is based on a published article co-authored with Dr Jessica Bates, an academic at Ulster University (Finlay and Bates, 2019). It offers a review of prison library literature, identifying the gaps in research and subsequent relevance of this study. It then proposes a theoretical framework for prison library research, which serves as a foundation for this study and guides both the research design and analysis of data collection. Edits have been made to the layout of subject headings and numbering of figures and tables, to align it with the structure of the overall thesis. Other minor edits have been made to wording, again to align the article with the written structure and presentation of the thesis. An additional discussion of Garner's (2019) work has been added, as this was published subsequent to this article and is relevant to the study. The discussion of critical librarianship and relationship between education research and theories of desistance has also been extended. In all other regards, the manuscript is unchanged and reflects what was published in the *Journal of Prison Education and Reentry*. Authors retain copyright of articles submitted to the *Journal of Prison Education and Reentry* and are permitted to share their work.

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### **Jayne Finlay (Candidate)**

Writing and compilation of manuscript, conducting of literature review, development of theoretical framework and design of figures and tables.

### **Dr Jessica Bates (Supervisor)**

Assisted with manuscript compilation and structure, editing of manuscript.

Recommended that both critical librarianship and the Generic Learning Outcomes model should be considered in framework for the research.

## 2.1 Introduction

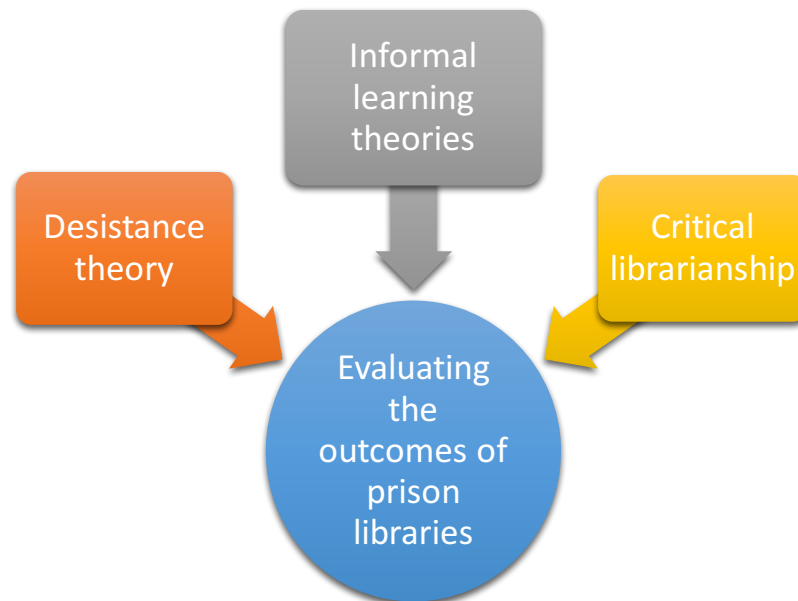
“Much recreational reading is indirectly educational, but the library has possibilities for direct education that have not yet been realised in any penal institution in the country. If one could choose only one of the agencies necessary for a well-rounded program of education in a penal institution, he could do well to choose an adequate library.” (MacCormick, 1931, p.150)

Writing in the United States in 1931, MacCormick’s seminal work on prison education recognised the integral role that libraries could play in the education of prisoners. Positive developments have been made in the global provision of prison library services since then, but the standard of this provision remains inconsistent across countries and across individual institutions. While much has been written in this field – both by practitioners and library researchers – there remains a paucity of empirical evidence of prisoners’ experiences of using library services. There also remains a lack of cohesion between prison library research, prison education research and broader criminological studies. Without a strong evidence base of prisoners’ experiences of the library, and a deeper consideration of relevant theoretical constructs across these disciplines, the full possibilities of the prison library has yet to be uncovered. This research project goes some way in addressing this gap in prison library research. It draws together theories of desistance, informal learning and critical librarianship to build a theoretical lens and framework through which the role and outcomes of the library can be better understood (see Figure 4).

Early prison education literature and prison education policies acknowledge the centrality of the library in the educational experiences of prisoners (MacCormick, 1931; Forster, 1981; Council of Europe, 1990). It is clear, however, that the library’s potential for supporting education is still much overlooked in modern day prison policies. In 2015, Dame Sally Coates was commissioned to undertake a review of prison education across England and Wales and provide recommendations for reform. Her review, published in 2016, affirmed that “education should be at the heart of the prison system” (Coates, 2016b, p.i). It both considered the current level of education

provision in prison and provided a number of recommendations for development. The report stressed the need for governors to be awarded greater autonomy in making decisions about the delivery of education in their own institution. Other significant recommendations included personal learning plans for individual prisoners, and the provision of professional development opportunities for all those working with prisoners to ensure that a high level of education is delivered at all times (p.6). The report, however, lacked any discussion about library services and their role in prisoner education. At a conference held by Prisoners' Education Trust in 2016, Coates was challenged on the report failing to mention the role of libraries. Whilst she acknowledged that she observed some good practice during her prison visits, she commented that libraries were underused and that prisoners were often unable to access libraries when they wished (Coates, 2016a).

Existing empirical research of prisoners' experiences of library services remain within the niche field of prison librarianship. This research argues for wider inclusion of library services in contemporary research on prisoners' experiences of learning, to avoid such side-lining of the services in futures reviews and decision-making. The current climate of prison education research – which is strongly influenced by desistance narratives and emphasises the importance of informal learning opportunities – offers a window of opportunity for the fuller realisation of the possibilities of the prison library. The framework presented in this chapter may serve as a foundation for future prison library research and will ideally encourage both library and education practitioners and researchers to build a much-needed body of evidence in this area. This framework may be challenging to realise in practice, particularly where libraries are not presently equipped to provide the range of services outlined in the framework. Nonetheless, it has the potential to inform praxis and may be useful in helping to persuade stakeholders of the benefits of investing in a well-resourced library service.



**Figure 4.** Theoretical contexts for evaluating prison library outcomes

## 2.2 Existing prison library literature

Current knowledge of prison library services exists mostly in the form of policy documents and international guidelines (see section 1.3.1), or publications written by those with experience of working in the profession (Vogel, 1995, 2009; Lehmann, 2003, 2011; Clark and MacCreaigh, 2006). These publications explore the purpose of prison libraries and provide practical advice on how best to manage and deliver library services. A 2011 issue of the *Library Trends* journal put a spotlight on prison libraries, outlining developments in services across Europe, North America and Japan. These articles provide helpful insights into policies and practices across the world but are mostly descriptive in nature and offer little in the way of theory development or empirical evidence of how individuals in prison benefit from these services. Through an exploration of the history of prison libraries, Rubin’s work (1973, 1974; Rubin and Souza, 1989) contends more seriously with the theoretical grounding of prison library services. Her research offers a strong contribution to prison library literature, particularly in unpacking its role and purpose within the prison. It is again lacking in empirical evidence to show prisoners’ actual experience of engaging with library services and the impact of these services. Stearns (2004, p.62) is critical of prison library literature for describing only “how a library functions rather than provide

measurable evidence of how well it serves its mission.” He called for more comprehensive research with “a coherent philosophical foundation” that would offer more compelling evidence of the value of library services (p. 62).

Evaluations of specific literacy and reader development programmes, along with empirical studies of reading practices in prison (Trounstone and Waxler, 2006; Sweeney, 2010, 2012) arguably offer the most convincing evidence of the positive outcomes of using library services. They look beyond staff expertise and give a voice to library patrons, something which is largely absent from prison library research. Garner’s recent study of prison library users in Australia takes important steps in addressing this void. Recognising the necessity of learning from prisoners, her research adopts a phenomenological approach to uncovering the experiences of those who engage with the library (Garner, 2017). The case studies presented in this current study seek to build upon these findings by exploring prisoners’ engagement with library services across the UK and Ireland. It situates this empirical evidence within the theoretical framework outlined later in this chapter, in order to better understand the meaning behind these experiences and resulting implications for policy and practice.

The prison library should provide individuals with “the opportunity to develop literacy skills, pursue personal and cultural interests, as well as life-long learning” (Lehmann and Locke, 2005, p.4). These opportunities are facilitated through a range of literacy and reader development programmes, as well as peer-learning and family literacy schemes. Further to the resources and programmes on offer, the very space of the library is deemed important within the prison. The words “normalcy” and “normalisation” appear repeatedly throughout prison library literature (Vogel, 2009; Lehmann, 2011; Dilek-Kayaoglu and Demir, 2014), as the library is often the only place within the prison that offers a public service and resembles the outside world. Vogel (2009, p.20) describes the library as an “oasis of equality and respect” in an otherwise hostile environment which often demeans and dehumanises individuals. A participant in Finlay’s study on prison-based family literacy programmes noted the contrast between the two environments: “It’s peaceful in here. We need that. It’s peaceful compared to the craziness of the wings” (Finlay, 2014, p.38).

As with many prison-based programmes and services, the provision of library services has changed over time in line with the shifting goals of the criminal justice system. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, reading was considered to be part of the cure for a prisoner's sinful nature, and literature was provided to encourage moral reform (Sullivan, 2000). As the penal climate became less punitive, the library was given more of a central role in supporting the rehabilitation of prisoners. Vogel (2009, p.10) identifies the 1970s in particular as being the "golden years" of prison librarianship in the United States, when an increasingly positive attitude toward prisoners' human rights enabled librarians to separate their goals from those of the prison. European literature also reflects this shift, with prison libraries in Spain, France and Italy all proposing reform to library services in line with a new political direction in the late 1970s and 80s (Costanzo et al., 2011; Cramard and McLoughlin, 2011; Perez Pulido and DeAngelo, 2011). New prison policy was also developed in the United Kingdom at this time which aligned prison libraries with the public library model (Home Office, 1978).

These changes were welcomed by library staff, most of whom favoured Rubin's view that library services should be seen as a "library project and not an arm of corrections" (1974, p.442). It is this view which provides one of the greatest challenges facing prison librarians and educators alike, as they aim to provide services within an institution whose agenda is vastly different from that of their own. Education celebrates and encourages autonomy and freedom of thinking, but opportunities for autonomy are hugely inhibited by the very nature of incarceration. Gehring and Eggleston (2006, p.xiii) describe the prison environment as "bleak and antithetical to the educational mission." When faced with such a "bleak" and challenging environment, it can be tempting to fall into line with the prison agenda and to work solely toward the aims of rehabilitation and reducing recidivism. For many people in prison, positive experiences of formal and informal learning could indeed be a key factor in reaching these goals. However, it is widely agreed among prison educators that the purpose of education in prison should be the same as that of adult education (Council of Europe, 1990). This aim is to facilitate every human's right to learn, which is "key to their human development" (p.11). Behan (2014, p.28) also warns against aligning the goals of education with those of the prison, stating that "prison education

must define its own objectives based on educational principles and be cautious about adopting or adapting to the vagrancies of changing penal policy if they are inimical to the objectives of penal policy.”

In a similar vein, libraries in prison are faced with the challenge of adhering to the principles and ethics of librarianship in an institution which limits the freedom, privacy and autonomy of individuals. The IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (1994) asserts that all libraries should provide “free and unlimited access to knowledge, thought, culture and information” (para.1) to all members of society, regardless of “age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status” (para.6). These services must extend to those cut off from society, for whom access to information and knowledge may be even more crucial. Access to the library and library resources is a statutory requirement in all prisons in the UK, underlining the fact that freedom to access information is a universal human right which should not be left behind at the prison door. The information resources available in the library should meet the legal, recreational and educational needs of prisoners (Wilhelmus, 1999). This research considers the ways in which ethical library services can effectively be provided within the prison context. It also considers the possibility that the recent influence of desistance research on criminal justice strategies in the United Kingdom has the potential to help mitigate this conflict between the library and the prison.

This overview of literature and policy has outlined the history and purpose of prison library services, and the range of services it offers to incarcerated individuals. At the same time, it has revealed what Stearns (2004, p.62) calls a “lacuna” of evidence showing the actual benefits of these services. Garner’s recent research into prisoner experiences makes positive steps in this direction, but it is clear that a larger body of empirical evidence, grounded in relevant theoretical constructs, is needed to truly understand the role of the library in the lives of prisoners. This research takes steps to address this need, by linking central themes found in desistance literature, informal learning theories and critical librarianship to the potential benefits of using library services. The following paragraphs provide an overview of desistance research and how it has already been used by those working in prison education and prison-based



arts programmes to better understand the value of their services. This sets the context for how the findings of desistance research may likewise contribute to a deeper understanding of the value of the prison library.

### 2.3 Desistance research and the desistance paradigm

Criminological research has traditionally been concerned with understanding the onset of offending behaviour, rather than how and why individuals turn away from a life of crime. Desistance research focuses instead on the cessation of criminal behaviour, and in particular the cognitive changes that takes place in the lives of individuals in reaching that point. Although there is no one clear theory of desistance, Maruna (2016, p.289) states that all desistance research involves “the study of how and why individuals we label as ‘offenders’ break free from this lifestyle.” What sets this field of research apart from traditional discussions of reform and rehabilitation is that it turns away from the “what works?” mentality and considers instead *how* change works. In doing so, it shifts the focus from programmes or interventions to individual lives, and to understanding the processes which take place during the journey of desistance. This has significant implications for the criminal justice system and how it might effectively support the natural processes of change taking place in the lives of people in prison.

Most desistance research focuses on the lives of individuals before and after incarceration. Prisons are considered to be detrimental to the desistance process as they are likely to “derail” rather than facilitate “the normative processes of maturation associated with desistance from crime” (Maruna and LeBel, 2010, p.69). Incarceration removes positive social ties and often generates new negative associations; it removes an individual’s autonomy, and can cement criminal identities (McNeill and Weaver, 2010; Liebling, 2012). These are all consequences which directly oppose factors thought to support desistance. For this reason, McNeill (2011) considered the concept of a “desistance-supporting prison” to be a possible oxymoron. He still, however, stresses the necessity of working toward this challenging goal, and there has been a resulting strand of research which seeks to apply the findings of desistance theory to

practice, both within prisons and during post-release support. Farrall (2002, 2004), Maruna and LeBel (2010) and McNeill (2006, 2016) have led the way in theorising about what desistance-focused criminal justice practice looks like. This turn in desistance research, coined the “desistance paradigm” (Maruna and LeBel, 2010), has influenced recent policy changes and helped to re-imagine the purpose and potential of prison-based programmes and services. This is perhaps seen most poignantly in its influence on strategic planning documents in both the Northern Ireland Prison Service and Scottish Prison Service, as discussed in Chapter One.

Maruna (2015) uses the questions below (Figure 5) as a checklist with which to challenge the modern prison, and in doing so paints a picture of what a desistance-supporting prison might look like. These questions are helpful in considering how library services can (and in many cases already do) support the desistance process of those in prison.

<b>Do our prisons:</b>	Provide opportunities for prisoners to find meaning and purpose in their punishment?
	Take fundamental self-transformation seriously?
	Faciliate and celebrate such change?
	Allow room for hope?
	Provide opportunities for prisoners to 'give back' and make a contribution, not as unpaid punishment but as good citizenship?
	Allow individuals to be leaders, to take initiative and assist in the overall mission of the prison/programme?

**Figure 5.** Elements of a desistance-supporting prison (Adapted from a lecture given by Maruna at Cambridge University, 2015)

These questions reflect the “strengths-based approach” to the desistance paradigm proposed by Burnett and Maruna (2006). They suggest that interventions in prisons should not be based on risk assessments, since these can reinforce negative criminal

identities. They should instead be based around supporting an individual's potential for positive change and the ability to take control of their lives. This has significant implications for the provision of both prison education and library services, requiring that services be developed from an understanding of an individual's strengths, and that they provide resources and design programmes which cultivate and develop these strengths.

#### 2.3.4 Desistance research and prison education research

While the area of desistance research has only recently begun to consider its relevance to prison practices and policies, many of the aspects considered to be key to desistance narratives have long been present in pedagogical discourse and have been core to education provision in prison. In building itself upon pedagogical principles and not seeking to align itself with the ever-changing agenda of the criminal justice system (see Section 2.2), prison education takes a "whole person" approach, focusing on personal development and "enabling the student to take control over some aspects of life" (Council of Europe, 1990, p.43). Research has shown that engaging with education during incarceration may offer individuals a way of imagining a different future for themselves (Behan, 2014; Szifris et al., 2018). It can provide opportunities for identity transformation or reformation, which is another central aspect of desistance research (Maruna, 2001). Duguid's work in particular shows how participation in education programmes enables a natural process of self-transformation. Education offers learners the opportunity to exercise choice and views the prisoner as an individual "subject" rather than an "object" of a treatment or rehabilitation programme (Duguid, 2000). Desistance research also emphasises the need for individual agency in building social capital, transforming identities and ultimately having control over one's future (Maruna, 2001; Paternoster and Bushway, 2009). This is especially aligned with critical pedagogy which encourages students to act as active agents in their own education and to develop a critical consciousness (Freire, 1974; 1998).

It could be argued then that desistance research is making visible to policymakers what has already been identified in much prison education research and practice. Education

has historically played a fundamental, if somewhat overlooked, role in prison reform – what Gehring (2017, p.1) refers to as the “hidden heritage” of prison reform. With this in mind, this study could indeed have taken an alternative approach. Rather than asking how theories of desistance help us to better understand the outcomes of engaging with library services, it could instead have focused on how theories of education and librarianship could contribute to our understanding of desistance. This study recognises, however, the lack of criminological discourse within the field of prison librarianship and argues that desistance research could help to inform library educators and researchers about broader criminal justice issues and policies and, perhaps even more significantly, that desistance research offers a timely and appropriate language with which to articulate the value of library services. It recognises that the desistance paradigm appears to be a positive step for prison education and library provision, as concepts intrinsic to librarianship are finally being used to inform the direction of prison policy and practice.

This strand of criminological research has been readily welcomed by those working in correctional education. Recognising that many of the concepts key to desistance research have always been present in pedagogical philosophies, both academics and practitioners have sought to show how learning in prisons can help to support an individual’s journey of desistance. There is an increasing amount of research in this area, and it has been the focus of a number of recent doctoral studies (see Carrigan, 2013; Cleere, 2013; Pike, 2014; Nichols, 2016). The Prisoner Learning Alliance, a UK-based organisation which works to influence education policy and practice in prisons, has also undertaken research in this area. Researchers and practitioners worked together to develop a *Theory of Change* to “stimulate conversation about the purpose and value of prison education” and to improve the academic rigour of studies which evaluate the potential outcomes of prison education and learning (PLA, 2016). This theory is informed by key literature on both prison education and desistance research and evidences the ways in which education impacts upon wellbeing, human capital, social capital, knowledge, skills and employability as well as the overall prison culture.

More recently, Szifris et al (2018) sought to develop an initial theory of prison education informed by prison sociology and desistance, as a way of clearly articulating the role of education in the lives of prisoners and the ways in which education can contribute to the desistance process. They take a holistic view of the purpose of education in that it not only leads to new knowledge and skills but also “involves the broader sense of developing as a person” (p.42). Their review of literature and proposed “general theory” of prison education focuses on three aspects: education as a *hook for change* and its impact on personal identity, the *safe space* provided by education classes and relevance to social identity, and the relevance of skills and *qualifications*, (p.45). They again make clear the inherent links between the natural outcomes of engaging with education and the process of desistance. The authors recognise that a limit of their proposed theory is the need for input from different perspectives and evidence from other disciplines, particularly that of education and pedagogy. It highlights again a need for collaboration across disciplines. The legacy of prison education and librarianship is made clear throughout this thesis, as is the need for collaboration between practitioners and researchers across the fields of prison education, prison librarianship and criminology.

## 2.4 Informal learning theories

The framework seen in Table 1 (p.38) has also been informed by informal learning theories, and the move toward providing increased informal, non-compulsory learning opportunities in prisons. The importance of informal learning has long been recognised in pedagogical practice. Researchers and practitioners acknowledge that the goal of education extends beyond simply gaining academic qualifications that enhance future employment prospects. Education facilitates the “development of competent and humane citizens who are proactive participants in social life” (Duncan-Andrade and Morrell, 2008, p.18). Many of the skills and characteristics needed to be social agents, such as “critical reasoning skills, self-confidence, self-esteem, empowerment, changed perspectives” (Warr, 2016, p.18) can often be developed through more informal, self-directed learning opportunities. While there are a range of definitions of informal learning, this research draws on influential studies by both Livingstone (1999) and McGivney (1999). Their work considers informal learning to be something “which we

undertake individually or collectively on our own without externally imposed criteria or the presence of an institutionally organised instructor” (Livingstone, 1999, p.493) and stems from “expressed interest and needs” of individuals (McGivney, 1999, p.v). McGivney (ibid.) adds that it may also include structured short courses, but ones which are delivered in “flexible and informal ways.”

What is clear is that informal learning stems from the learning needs and desires of the individual, rather than something which fulfils the purpose of the government or education system. Viewed in this way, it becomes clear why opportunities for informal learning may be so important in a prison. The criminal justice system has long viewed education as merely a rehabilitative tool, or as a “mechanism to reduce reoffending” (McNeill, 2014, para.4). The thought of education as yet another method of reform imposed upon them can add to the already negative perception of education held by many of those in prison. Literature shows that prisoners are often reluctant to take part in formal education programmes, as they may have had difficult schooling experiences prior to incarceration (Irwin, 2003, 2008; Farley and Pike, 2016; Warr, 2016). Irwin (2008, p.23) criticises the often “inflexible learning modes” offered in prison as they replicate “the negative learning episodes so deeply embedded in the prisoner’s identity.” Opportunities for more informal, flexible learning have the potential to mitigate these prior negative experiences. In his research on prisoners’ motivations to take part in education courses, Behan (2014, p.20) concludes that the prison must offer spaces which allow individuals “to voluntarily engage in different types of learning, at their own pace, at a time of their choosing.” It is this observation which suggests significant links between the benefits of informal learning and engagement with prison library services.

The prison library offers a space where visitors can pursue their own recreational or educational reading interests. Prisoners are not obligated to visit the library, and so it is unlikely to be viewed as yet another method of government-imposed reform. Informal learning programmes such as book-discussion groups, creative writing classes or family literacy schemes are often offered but rarely compulsory. An evaluation of Turning Pages (a peer literacy programme based in the United Kingdom) revealed the

value that participants place on the “informal, non-institutional nature” of the programme (Hopkins and Kendall, 2017, p.4). A deeper consideration of informal learning activities and engagement with an informal learning environment such as the prison library should help contribute to our understanding of the potential impact of library services. Woven together with recent theories of desistance and critical librarianship, it can help to construct a foundation from which to examine prison library experiences and outcomes.

## 2.5 Critical librarianship

It is not only the field of prison librarianship which has failed to establish a strong theoretical body of work. The wider library profession is one which has historically valued practice over theory, and as a result has faced criticism for the lack of empirically grounded theories on which these services should be based (Connaway and Powell, 2010, p.6). Stressing the need for a strong philosophical foundation, Litwin (2009, p.x) states, “Sound ideas about what librarianship is and what its goals are permit us to claim a degree of autonomy in institutions where we might otherwise serve as mere functionaries rather than as the professionals we are.” This seems particularly poignant for the prison library, which is often viewed as subsidiary within the wider prison service. One important response to this critique has been the movement of critical librarianship, whose principles are embedded within this research project. Samek (2007, p.xxiii) describes critical librarianship as a movement where “considerations for the human condition and for human rights take precedence over other professional concerns.” It is a practical movement which has been informed by critical theories and seeks to bring social justice principles into library practice. While many of its principles have always been present in library work, it is really only in the past decade that researchers and practitioners have grappled theoretically with its concepts and what they mean for “LIS curricula, research and practice” (Schroeder and Hollister, 2014, p.3). Prison librarianship is arguably the most challenging sector in the profession for librarians to put their patrons’ rights above professional concerns. The context in which these services are provided results in restricted access to information,

high levels of censorship and little to no access to information technology and online resources. It is surprising then that there has been little discussion about what critical librarianship may mean for providers of prison library services. Taking a critical approach to evaluating prison library services should help to draw the often-neglected field of prison librarianship into modern theoretical advances of the wider profession.

Critical theories tend to focus on marginalised sections of society, with the aim of empowering disenfranchised or oppressed communities. Critical librarianship therefore challenges the library worker to recognise existing structures of power in their place of work or surrounding community, to question who is being excluded or silenced, and to consider the ways in which they might act to redress structural inequalities (Barr-Walker and Sharifi, 2019; Drabinski, 2019). Critical theories, when applied to education and librarianship alike, acknowledge and validate the existing knowledge and experiences of the learner and encourages them to pursue knowledge which stems from their own needs and interests. In the prison context, this in line with what has already been noted in relation to desistance and informal learning theories. The prison library offers a rare space for individuals to take part in self-directed learning and can help to mitigate the idea that only those in power know what is best for them. Reflecting on their critical approach to library services in a Canadian prison, Lang and Sacuta (2014, p.99) note that the best part of their service is that library initiatives “are no longer just presented to the women; they are created by the women.” This shows how the library and library staff are in a unique position to disrupt, even on a small scale, the structural inequalities present in the prison service.

If critical librarianship is to be concerned with empowering communities and opposing the oppressive nature of the prison environment, it must also consider the prison library’s unique potential for helping to build social capital among its users. This includes both generating social capital between prisoners (*bridging social capital*) as well as providing avenues for *bonding social capital* between families and communities outside of prison (McNeill and Weaver, 2010). Social capital and its benefits for individuals, communities and the economy is discussed widely in sociological literature (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Putman, 1993, 2001). Studies in the field of library



and information science draw most often on Putman's work. For Putman (1993, p.167), social capital entails "features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions." He applies this definition specifically to public libraries in his influential work, *Better Together: Restoring the American Community* (2003). Exploring the ways in which social capital was generated by branch libraries in Chicago, Putnam and Feldstein recognised that the modern library is "an active and responsive part of the community and an agent of change" (p.35). They go as far as to describe libraries as "the heartbeat of the community" (p.34). This work served as an impetus for further studies of the intersection of libraries and social capital. Vårheim's research, for example, found that libraries have potential for accommodating diversity in patrons, promoting trusting relationships between diverse people and, as a result of this process, creating trust toward people in general, which is a vital component of building social capital (2009, p.373).

The complex nature of social capital becomes even more confounded when applied to the prison setting. In the outside world, the kind of resources inherent in social relationships and central to building social capital include formal and informal networks such as colleagues, peers and family, trust and safety, civic engagement and agency (Lafferty et., 2016). As a place which separates individuals from these resources, it is questionable whether a prison is a space in which social capital can be generated. Farrall (2004) and McNeill (2006) argue that prisons must find a way for people to access and build social capital both during and after incarceration, as it is a significant contributing factor to desistance. Doing so is crucial both for the life of the individual and for the wider family and community from which he or she has been removed. It is imperative for libraries to reflect on how these avenues have been dismantled for prisoners and the ways in which the library can help to restore a sense of agency, provide opportunities for family connections and community engagement and build an environment of trust within the prison. Suggestions of how prison libraries provide these opportunities are offered in Section 2.7.3 when discussing the theoretical model used to inform this research project. Findings from case study research later in Chapters Five and Six will again illustrate these opportunities.

## 2.6 Reconstructing prison library research

Caution must be taken when thinking about the impact of any service which concerns human experience and development. This is especially true in prison, where complex backgrounds and widely varied demographics make it difficult to find “an appropriate means of measuring outcomes and evaluating change” (Behan, 2014, p.26).

Hedderman and Hucklesby (2015) note that criminal justice agencies are most often required to produce robust quantitative data, which focuses on *cases* rather than people, to show evidence of the efficiency of rehabilitation efforts. Producing this kind of quantitative data is difficult for providers of art-based activities, who are essentially being asked for “objective evidence to demonstrate subjective changes” (Albertson, 2015, p.280). Albertson raises a further flaw in this method, suggesting that “such interventions will be less effective if their purpose is primarily to gather questionable evidence, rather than support the offender” (p.280). Prison researchers argue that it is more appropriate to conduct qualitative research in order to better understand the prisoner experience and process of change which is taking place during that experience (Digard and Liebling, 2012). In an evaluation of their prison-based arts programme, Cox and Gelsthorpe (2012, p.265) agree that there is a “fundamental risk of underestimating the importance of *experience*” in such evaluations.

The emphasis on individual narratives, identity development and change processes in desistance research make a strong case for the validity of qualitative prison research. In light of this, various prison-based programmes have begun to re-imagine their role in supporting prisoners and how their services can and should be evaluated. A growing number of creative-arts based activities in prison have begun to use desistance theories as a framework to better understand their value and contribution to prisoners’ lives (McNeill et al., 2011; Albertson, 2015; Davey et al., 2015). The impact of the desistance paradigm on prison research is perhaps seen most clearly in the growing number of studies on education in prison. Recognising that many of the concepts key to desistance, such as identity transformation, motivation and self-empowerment, have always been present in pedagogical philosophies, both academics and practitioners have sought to show how learning in prison can contribute to an

individual's journey of desistance. A resulting *Theory of Change* was put forward by the Prisoner Learning Alliance to "stimulate conversation about the purpose and value of prison education" and to improve the academic rigour of studies which evaluate its outcomes (Champion and Noble, 2016, p.1). This theory was informed by key literature in both prison education and desistance research and has been instrumental in informing the direction of both education policy and practice within prisons, particularly within the UK.

This turn toward desistance-focused criminal justice practice has not yet reached the realm of prison library research. This research project takes seriously the call of Stearns for the development of a "coherent philosophical foundation" (2004, p.62) in prison library research and attempts to show how embedding prison library literature within a criminological framework, and more specifically that of desistance theory, does not do a dis-service to the library profession, but instead offers a positive language and framework within which to discuss the existing benefits of library services. Like other arts-based activities, it is difficult and perhaps inappropriate to measure or evaluate the outcomes of a good library service. The framework outlined on page 38 is therefore not a list of pre-defined outcomes to measure, but instead offers a way of discussing the potential outcomes of prisoner engagement with the library and the role of the library in a correctional setting.

This framework is underpinned by findings from existing prison library and education studies, and contemporary theories of desistance, informal learning and critical librarianship. Its layout and approach are largely informed by two already established frameworks in the fields of librarianship and prison education. The first is the Arts Council England's *Generic Learning Outcomes* model, which was developed in 2003 to demonstrate the impact and outcomes of cultural learning in museums, archives and libraries. This model was built on a "broad and inclusive definition of learning" (Arts Council England, 2003), which again draws on the importance of informal learning within a wide range of policy domains (Fodale and Bates, 2011). It acknowledges that the sole aim of learning is not simply to gain academic qualifications or ensure employability, but also to broaden one's knowledge and skills, deepen understanding

of ourselves and others, and improve overall wellbeing. The latter framework is the aforementioned *Theory of Change* model posited by the Prisoner Learning Alliance (Champion and Noble, 2016), which explores the value of learning in prison.

Each individual's experience of engaging with library services is unique, as is true of any learning experience. The framework outlined in Table 1 is not intended to limit these experiences but is instead broad enough to incorporate distinct individual experiences and serves as a guide to examining and understanding the potential outcomes of library engagement. This is similar to the Prisoner Learning Alliance's *Theory of Change* which acknowledges the complexity of learning in prison, and argues that "the only way to summarise it faithfully is at a general level, in which the arguments are set out broadly and which gives scope for application in a range of different circumstances and services" (Champion and Noble, 2016, p.4). Not all libraries are equipped to offer every resource or programme mentioned, but the figure below reflects the range of services generally available prison libraries across the UK. It is intended to aid qualitative research in this area, offering helpful and appropriate language by which to consider how libraries can facilitate change and contribute to personal development. It will ideally encourage practitioners and researchers to build a stronger body of evidence in this field and is therefore open to adaptation and development as empirical data continues to be collected. As noted by Harries et al. (2014, p.2), such models should not be static, "for they improve as our understanding and knowledge is advanced by evidence and observation." The framework is outlined briefly in Figure 6, then unpacked in more detail in Table 1 and the paragraphs that follow. This discussion will hopefully show that a desistance-based outlook may provide a more appropriate platform for the "evaluation" of prison library services and help to provide a deeper understanding of the experience of those who engage with these services.

2.7 The prison library impact framework



**Figure 6.** Areas of impact of prison libraries (Finlay, 2018a)

**Table 1.** The Prison Library Impact Framework (Finlay, 2018a)

Wellbeing and mental health		
Context	The library offers:	Possible outcomes:
Incarceration can be an isolating experience, and many prisoners suffer from poor mental health, depression and substance abuse. Levels of self-harm and suicide are higher than the general population. Prison can be a volatile and stressful environment in which to live.	<p>A safe, neutral space in the midst of an unsettling prison environment.</p> <p>A range of recreational and educational resources that encourage reading for pleasure and informal learning.</p> <p>A positive means of both mental and physical escape.</p> <p>Written resources about wellbeing and mental health.</p>	<p>Reduced stress and improved wellbeing.</p> <p>Better ability to cope with stressful situations.</p> <p>A constructive use of time whilst incarcerated.</p> <p>Creativity and enjoyment.</p> <p>Increased understanding of individual health and mental health needs.</p>

	Information about health-related programmes and activities in other prison departments.	Increased engagement in other prison programmes or activities.
<b>Identity transformation and personal development</b>		
Context	The library offers:	Possible outcomes:
<p>Prisoners may feel negatively about themselves, their achievements and their ability to change. They often associate with a negative, 'criminal' identity.</p> <p>Incarceration inherently limits an individual's control over their own life, leading to a loss of both agency and autonomy.</p>	<p>A range of literature, which reflects the background and experiences of the prison population.</p> <p>Freedom to choose how individuals spend their time, what information they access and what recreational or educational interests they pursue.</p> <p>Intellectual freedom.</p> <p>Informal, non-compulsory learning programmes and other recreational activities.</p> <p>Family literacy programmes.</p> <p>Peer-led literacy schemes.</p> <p>Work experience as a library orderly.</p>	<p>Development of an alternative, positive identity eg. parent, mentor, learner, reader, employee.</p> <p>New perspectives of themselves, their past actions and their current situation.</p> <p>The ability to express new ideas and engage with those holding different views.</p> <p>Increased autonomy and agency in an environment of control and discipline.</p> <p>Greater self-awareness and a better understanding of own strengths.</p>
<b>Social capital and social bonds</b>		
Context	The library offers:	Possible outcomes:
<p>Many prisoners have had negative experiences of education and other social institutions prior to incarceration. They may have poor social skills and the</p>	<p>A positive and neutral informal learning and social space.</p> <p>Peer-mentoring programmes, where prisoners can help to</p>	<p>Greater sense of belonging to community.</p> <p>Stronger social bonds with partners/children, and increased knowledge of</p>

<p>inability to relate well to those around them.</p> <p>Incarceration cuts individuals off from families, friends and communities. Opportunities to build social capital whilst incarcerated are limited, and this hinders successful resettlement into society.</p>	<p>develop the literacy skills of their peers.</p> <p>Informal reading and literacy programmes, which encourage participation and engagement with others.</p> <p>Family literacy programmes.</p> <p>Opportunities for lifelong learning.</p> <p>Pre-release support on finding employment and housing.</p> <p>Training on a range of skills useful for future employment.</p>	<p><i>how</i> to parent effectively and contribute to family life.</p> <p>Development of pro-social behavior.</p> <p>A desire to contribute/give something back to the community.</p> <p>Continued use of public libraries once released.</p>
<p>Hope and motivation</p>		
<p>Context</p>	<p>The library offers:</p>	<p>Possible outcomes:</p>
<p>The experience of incarceration often limits opportunities for hope and the motivation to change. It is hard for prisoners to imagine a changed future in a punitive environment.</p> <p>Prisoners have little contact with family and friends, who often play a key role in fostering self-belief and motivation.</p>	<p>Support from professional library staff to develop skills, explore personal interests and encourage learning and creativity.</p> <p>Celebration of personal achievements, e.g. through participation in reading or literacy schemes, and creative writing competitions.</p> <p>A range of potentially inspiring literary resources which describe the success and achievements of others.</p> <p>As a public service, often run by a civilian member of staff, the library provides a window to the outside world.</p>	<p>Increased confidence and self-esteem.</p> <p>Increased levels of self-efficacy.</p> <p>A sense of achievement and empowerment.</p> <p>Higher aspirations and hope for the future.</p> <p>An understanding of what skills are needed to achieve desired changes and goals.</p> <p>A positive and sustained change in both attitude and behaviour.</p>

Knowledge, skills and understanding		
Context	The library offers:	Possible outcomes:
<p>Many prisoners have had a negative experience of education, and are reluctant to participate in formal education classes. Others may be well-educated, but feel cut off from information and learning opportunities which allow them to explore and develop their interests.</p> <p>Prisoners may also be lacking in essential life skills, social skills and a range of employability skills, all of which are necessary both to navigate daily prison life and life on release.</p>	<p>Access to educational, legal and recreational sources of information (reflecting the needs and languages of the prison population).</p> <p>Exposure to new ideas and different worldviews.</p> <p>Informal, non-compulsory literacy and reader development programmes.</p> <p>Reading groups (at various levels).</p> <p>Creative writing opportunities.</p> <p>Peer-led literacy schemes.</p> <p>IT and digital literacy training.</p> <p>Pre-release support in searching and applying for jobs and housing.</p>	<p>Improved levels of literacy.</p> <p>Development of new interests and increased love for learning.</p> <p>Development of critical thinking skills.</p> <p>Increased tolerance and empathy for others.</p> <p>Participation in other education or vocational classes and workshops.</p> <p>Increased levels of digital literacy.</p> <p>Better equipped, both practically and emotionally, to handle the challenges of incarceration and release from prison.</p>

### 2.7.1 Wellbeing and mental health

While the model shown above has been influenced strongly by the findings of desistance research, it does not propose that prison libraries should only be concerned with contributing to the desistance of prisoners. One of the strengths of desistance research, and perhaps why it has such strong potential to influence prison library research, is its emphasis on viewing prisoners as individuals, and not simply as offenders in need of rehabilitation. If libraries – and other prison services – also recognise this, they must be concerned with the wellbeing of prisoners during incarceration, and not only with preparing individuals for release and resettlement. The psychological wellbeing of people in prison is repeatedly highlighted as a serious



concern. Many individuals enter prison with mental health problems, which are then often exacerbated by “separation from family and friends, boredom and loss of autonomy” (National Audit Office, 2017, p.14). The issues faced by those in prison are both diverse and complex, and it is not suggested that libraries alone can provide answers to these issues. It is clear, however, that all departments in the prison have their part to play and must work together to create an environment which diminishes the damaging effects of incarceration. The following paragraphs will outline briefly the ways in which the resources, space and learning programmes offered by the library has the potential to contribute positively to the lives of its visitors.

#### *2.7.1.1 Reading, bibliotherapy and mental health*

Librarians from all sectors are often required to fight to show that their service extends beyond that of a simple book-lending service. While this is certainly true, the benefits of having access to a wide range of literary resources also necessitate examination. This is particularly true of prison libraries, where the act of recreational reading is considered a positive form of escapism and a constructive way of alleviating the boredom that so often epitomises the prison experience. It is widely accepted that “purposeful activity is vital for wellbeing in custody” (Clark, 2016, p.8), and reading for pleasure is one form of so-called purposeful activity. A number of studies have been carried out on the experience of reading in prison, both as an individual endeavour and as part of shared reading groups (Trounstine and Waxler, 2006; Sweeney, 2010, 2012; Billington, 2011). Qualitative feedback collected for evaluation reports highlight the relaxing and calming nature of reading, showing it to be an activity which has the ability to relieve stress and take one’s mind off current circumstances (National Literacy Trust, 2016; Reading Agency, 2017).

In Rubin’s theorising on the purpose of prison libraries (1973), she concludes that bibliotherapy is perhaps the greatest contribution the library makes to the rehabilitation of prisoners. Bibliotherapy has been defined as the use of books “selected on the basis of content in a planned reading programme designed to facilitate the recovery of patients suffering from mental illness or emotional

disturbance” (Reitz, 2004). More simply and broadly, the basic premise of bibliotherapy is that “information, guidance and solace can be found through reading” (Brewster, 2018, p.3). In the prison setting, bibliotherapy can be offered through carefully planned reading groups or more individualised reading plans developed by library staff, social workers and health specialists based on the prisoner’s “diagnosis and prognosis” (Sweeney, 2008, p.33). For Rubin (1973), bibliotherapy offers people in prison a chance to identify with characters or storylines in a book. This is particularly relevant when considering the centrality of identity transformation in desistance theories. Rubin (1973, p.14) recognises what desistance research also confirms, that a person is forced to assume an “alien role” of *criminal* when entering prison which comes with an “unavoidable stigma.” It can be easy therefore to fall into a prison subculture and take on this identity, but bibliotherapy offers an alternative identity association. This can be seen in Sweeney’s extensive study on women’s experiences of reading in prison. Sweeney notes that for many readers, “encountering a character who inspires them, serves as a model to emulate, or demonstrates a capacity for change can seem vitally important to women who feel an urgent desire to change but a deep uncertainty about their ability to do so” (p.7). When the women in this study encountered characters whose lives and experiences they could relate to, it helped them to “grapple with the complexities of their own lives” (ibid.)

Another arm of bibliotherapy is the provision of resources which focus specifically on issues related to health, mental health and general wellbeing. One particularly successful initiative which began in public libraries in the UK is *Reading Well: Books on Prescription*, which has now also been implemented in prison libraries across the UK. This is a scheme endorsed by health professionals, with the aim of helping individuals to “manage their mental health and wellbeing by providing access to accredited self-help reading” (Society of Chief Librarians, 2015, p.3). Books can either be recommended to individuals by health professionals or are simply available on the shelves for anyone to borrow. An evaluation carried out in 2015 (which included responses from both public and prison libraries) noted that readers found the books helpful both for understanding their condition and for raising their confidence about managing symptoms. Fifty-five percent reported that their symptoms had reduced as a

result of reading these books (ibid., p.14). The report also noted improvements to the knowledge and skills of library staff and strengthened partnerships with health organisations (p.4). This is particularly important in prison libraries, as all departments in the prison should be well-informed and working together to support the needs of this particularly vulnerable population.

A recent article published by Garner (2019) focuses on the role of the library as supporting the “whole person” in terms of reducing stress and supporting mental health (p.343). Her research on prisoners’ experiences of using libraries in Australian prisons led her to conclude that “prison libraries are more likely to play a role in supporting the ‘whole person’ in terms of general wellbeing than they are to support prisoner education” (p.344). The research presented in this thesis also takes seriously the role of the library in supporting the wellbeing of prisoners. It is also, however, informed by European prison education research which takes the view that education itself is concerned with human growth and personal development. In their recommendations for prison education policies across Europe, the Council of Europe (1990, p.4) state explicitly that “Education in prison shall aim to develop the whole person bearing in mind his or her social, economic and cultural context.” The links drawn between library services and education in this study are not to suggest that support for formal education is the main function of the library, but rather that library and education services share a common purpose if they are both concerned with this support of the “whole person.” This study therefore highlights the distinct ways in which they do this and shows the benefits of increased collaboration between the two services.

#### *2.7.1.2 The space of the library and library as ‘place’*

It has already been noted that one of the most crucial aspects of the prison library is the “normal” space it provides in the midst of a disruptive and unsettling environment. Beyond simply offering a haven or place of escape, the library can foster an environment based on trust and mutual respect for each other. A participant in Stevens’ doctoral research noted that “you’re given a little bit more respect” in the

library (1995, p.160). This can be hugely significant for the wellbeing of prisoners. Studies carried out by leading criminologists on the pains of imprisonment stress the need for both trust and respect between prisoners, and in prisoner/staff relationships (Hulley et al., 2012). In her research on the moral quality of prison life, Liebling (2011, p.532) concluded that “the ‘differences that matter’ are in the domain of interpersonal relationships and treatments, and the use of authority.” She points to the impact that differing “levels of respect, fairness and humanity” can have on the prisoner experience (p.533). Respect was found to be more than civility or fairness, but rather treating prisoners as autonomous individuals. Her research found that prisoners considered respect to be “recognition of the inherent dignity and worth of the person, and of differences between individuals” (Liebling, assisted by Arnold, 2004, p.212). This kind of library environment – one where mutual respect is encouraged, individuality is recognised and differences celebrated – can serve as a good example of what is possible within a prison and perhaps have a positive impact on the wider prison culture.

This environment cultivated by the library space and the associations which are then made with the prison library contribute to an understanding of the library as *place*. It is important here to distinguish between the *space* of the library and the library as *place* and the unique value of each in relation to the prison library setting. Both descriptions are used in this research, having different but interconnected implications for library engagement and our understanding of the benefits of the library. In simple terms, *space* is used when speaking about the physicality of the library, for example, its size, how it is furnished and the activities this physical space lends itself to. When talking about the library as *place*, a social dimension is added to the meaning, where both the physical and social aspects of the library are considered. The two concepts are certainly related, with the physical space of the library playing a large part in how it is used and how social interactions and social learning takes place. This is reflected throughout library literature, specifically in relation to public libraries. Studies have shown how the public library contributes to community engagement and development by providing a free community space, technological resources, and educational and cultural learning experience and a place to relieve isolation leading to community

empowerment and social cohesion (Aabø and Audunson, 2012; Usherwood, 2002; Johnson, 2010, 2012; Buschman, 2003). When thinking of the prison library, it is fair to say that many of the ways in which the library is used - the positive interactions which take place, the rapport cultivated with prison library staff, cultural and social learning experiences and positive pre-existing associations with libraries in general contribute to this understanding of library as *place*.

The physical space and design of the library and its significance in the prison setting will also be discussed in this thesis. Recent work exploring prison architecture and design acknowledges that, while this alone does not change behaviours, “the design of the built environment does affect behaviour and support positive change” (Karthaus et al., 2019, p.193). A poignant example of how the space and design of the library can affect user engagement is shown in the redesign and renovation of the library at Munster Correctional Facility, named “Library of the Year 2007” by the German Library Association (Peschers, 2011). With financial backing from both the state and institution, a new library was opened which was designed to “lead the patron out of the confined and dreary monotony of the prison life into distant imaginary worlds” (Peschers, 2011, p.529) It became the “most innovative” space within the prison (p.534) and caused library visitors to become more engaged with its services. Peschers goes as far as to describe this space as “an apothecary for the soul” (p.529). How the library space affects user behaviour within the library becomes evident during the case study phase of this research, where the differences in layout and design of the two libraries clearly lead to different levels of prisoner engagement with library resources and learning programmes.

### 2.7.2 Identity transformation and personal development

Underlying many of the discussions around desistance and processes of change is the concept of identity transformation. Maruna’s (2001) seminal study on desistance sought to understand the meaning that individuals gave to their own life narratives during their journey of desistance from crime. He found that sustained desistance required a fundamental shift in a person’s sense of self. He was concerned specifically

with the theory that an individual's identity and self-perception is heavily influenced by the labels applied to them by the rest of society (labelling theory). For an individual to sustain desistance, it is important that they are able to successfully shed the negative label of "offender" and develop a new, pro-social identity (Maruna and LeBel, 2010, p.78). What role might the prison library play in helping to facilitate this shift in identity? When a prisoner enters the library, he or she is given the opportunity to escape – albeit temporarily – from their identity as prisoner. They become a reader. A writer. A learner. Peer-mentoring programmes offer the role of teacher and mentor. Family literacy programmes remind them of their role as a parent or grandparent. The following discussion will explore these ideas in more detail, and show how the library space, resources and programmes offer incarcerated individuals the means to imagining a new self and new possibilities.

#### *2.7.2.1 Agency*

The concept of agency – the belief that an individual is free to make their own choices and have control over their future – is central to Maruna's findings on identity transformation. In fact, Laub and Sampson (2003, p.280) argue that "personal agency looms large" in most theories of desistance. The prison environment, with its emphasis on control, security and surveillance, grossly inhibits opportunities for individual agency and autonomy during incarceration. Rehabilitation programmes designed to correct offending behaviour are often imposed upon individuals without their say, leaving little room for choice or self-determination. Prison researchers note the aversion that incarcerated individuals often have toward such programmes and interventions. Harris's research found that prisoners were reluctant to take part in such programmes, which they considered to be designed to fix individuals who are seemingly "deficient, ineffectual, misguided, untrustworthy, possibly dangerous, and almost certain to get in trouble again" (2005, p.318). Harris's research revealed that, in contrast to these attitudes about rehabilitative programmes, persons in prison embraced the desistance perspective which focused instead on their strengths rather than trying to address their deficiencies.

These negative perspectives are not limited to offender behaving programmes. Even education in prison is sometimes viewed as “an intervention concerned with correcting a prisoner’s offending behaviour” (Warr, 2016, p.21). As noted earlier, one way of overturning this view of education is to increase opportunities for informal, non-compulsory learning in prison. The informal learning opportunities and informal learning space offered by the library could be a vital source of agency for people in prison. Garner’s recent research in Australian prisons referred to a “responsibility for self” that was enabled by the library, where individuals could make choices about how to spend their time in an institution which generally removes this choice (Garner, 2017, p.113). Referring to prison library visits, one participant in her study noted, “[the library is] something I can do when I want. Not something I’m getting told I have to do if I want to move through the system” (p.161). As a public institution, whose staff are often employed by a local public library service, the library reflects experiences outside of prison and may enable a heightened sense of autonomy which is not experienced in other areas of the prison. Singer (2000) goes as far as to say that the library is one of the few places that can be approached with the same freedom as one has on the streets.

The experience of recreational reading can also play a role in the agency and identity transformation of prisoners, particularly if they are able to identify with the experiences and characters portrayed in the literature. Participants in Sweeney’s study of women’s prison reading groups found that books could be used as a “tool for framing and making sense of their experiences”, and that “readers often become ‘agents in and of’ their own stories and learn to exercise some control over the meaning of their lives” (Sweeney, 2010, p.7). Similar attitudes are evident in reflections on a prison-based literature programme – *Changing Lives Through Literature* – which stresses the importance of providing resources where readers will be able to relate to the characters and their stories. Trounstone (2008), a co-founder of this programme, designed it in such a way that literature could be used as a path to think more deeply about character and identity. If literature can indeed help some individuals to make sense of their own experiences and envision a different future, it

has significant implications for collection development in prison libraries. These goals can only be realised if the available literature reflects the diverse experiences and backgrounds of the prison population.

### 2.7.3 Social capital and social bonds

While developing the human capital of those in prison is important, McNeill (2009, p.28) makes it clear that “interventions based only on human capital...will not be enough.” Desistance research is critical of rehabilitation narratives for focusing too much on the development of knowledge and skills, to the detriment of overlooking the vital need to develop the social capital of individuals. In defining social capital, McNeill (2009, p.24) speaks of “the resources that inhere in social relationships and networks characterised by shared norms and reciprocal bonds.” The forming of significant life partnerships, family relationships or even disassociation with negative peer groups can help to increase social capital and support the process of desistance (Warr, 1998). This would suggest that prison policies and strategies should focus more on restoring the relationships that are inevitably damaged by incarceration and that, as much as possible, prison-based programmes should facilitate opportunities for the development of social capital. Beyond developing the knowledge and skills of individuals, libraries must therefore consider how their services contribute to an individual’s relationship with his or her family, friends and wider community.

The public library is considered to be an important social institution, where people of all ages, races and backgrounds come together and are exposed to different people, cultures and ideas. The same is true of a library behind bars. Many prisoners, who may not otherwise cross paths, meet in a space which encourages social learning and the development of cultural knowledge. Studies focusing on libraries and social capital view *trust* as being a significant aspect of the library experience. Vårheim’s research found that libraries have potential for accommodating diversity in patrons, promoting trusting relationships between diverse people and, as a result of this process, create trust toward people in general (Vårheim, 2009, p.373). This is also reflected in the *Generic Learning Outcomes* framework for libraries and museums, which highlights



opportunities to develop opinions on ourselves and others, and to create empathy and an increased tolerance for others (Arts Council England, 2003). As well as these positive interactions with other library users, researchers have identified the relationship between patrons and library staff as having significant bearings on the social capital produced by libraries. The interactions that occur between staff and patrons have the capacity to build trust, connect people to resources, reduce social isolation and help patrons gain skills in an increasingly online world (Johnson, 2012). Again, these relationships are arguably more crucial in a prison environment where patrons have lower social capital than the general public and greater literacy and information needs.

Looking beyond incarceration, it is possible that positive engagement with prison library services could encourage continued use of public libraries when released. This has implications for the role of the public library not only in working alongside prison libraries, but in providing support and resources for those experiencing resettlement into communities. It is difficult to measure prisoners' engagement with public libraries when they leave prison, as no individual is required to disclose such information when joining a public library. Examples exist, however, of how former prisoners have engaged with public libraries and the kind of services public libraries offer for people who have recently been released from prison. Vaccarino and Comrie (2010) describe a program run by the Whanganui Public Library in New Zealand where prisoners nearing the end of their sentence have the opportunity to take supervised visits to the library. Individuals in their study were asked about their perception of library use and if they would continue to visit after they were released. Participants described the way it created a sense of normal and offered the experience of being integrated with the public again and all prisoners in the study said they intended to use the public library on release. Dowling (2007, p.45) also notes the "positive connotation" the library has because of positive experiences in prison and claims that the public library then provides "a neutral and anonymous atmosphere in which to go about the business of restructuring their lives."

### 2.7.3.1 Family literacy initiatives

The interactions between prisoners and staff members may be said to improve *bridging social capital*, which refers to a wider network of colleagues and acquaintances (McNeill and Weaver, 2010). While this is important, desistance research also looks closely at *bonding social capital*, which refers to close ties with family and friends. Maintaining and building upon family relationships during incarceration is a key focus in recent criminal justice strategies and policies, with prison services working alongside external organisations to help develop these relationships. The Northern Ireland Prison Service *Family Strategy Policy 2010*, for example, affirms that “families have a vital role in helping prisoners achieve successful rehabilitation” (NIPS, 2010, p.4). Family literacy programmes, facilitated by the prison library, help to maintain this family contact with the added benefits of contributing to literacy levels, self-confidence and enjoyment of reading. Depending on budget and staff availability, these programmes range from simple book recordings, to parenting workshops or reading groups when the child is present during visiting times (Finlay, 2014). Social cognitive theory suggests that parental involvement early in a child’s educational life can lead to long-term academic success, suggesting that these programmes can have a positive impact on both parent and child. Family literacy programmes can also help to shift an individual’s identity from ‘prisoner’ to ‘parent’ and provide an element of hope and motivation for participants who are able to play a part in the literacy development of their child.

### 2.7.4 Hope and motivation

Alongside discussions of identity and agency, criminologists speak about the place of hope and motivation in a prisoner’s desistance narrative. This is linked to the ability of imagining a different future reality, and the belief in the ability to change. Maruna’s work in particular deems *hope* as a crucial factor in sustained desistance, and points to the role of others both in sparking and helping to maintain this hope (Maruna, 2001; Burnett and Maruna, 2006). Prison significantly limits opportunities for interaction

with those who are best placed to nurture such hope and motivation – the prisoners’ friends and families. A desistance-supporting prison must both increase opportunities for these interactions, and provide services that are geared toward fostering hope, self-belief and motivation to change. Table 1 notes a number of ways in which a well-run library service provides such opportunities, and the potential outcomes of engagement with these services. Prisoners can take part in family literacy programmes, as well as a number of other literacy schemes and events that both develop skills and nurture creativity. Positive interaction and encouragement from library staff can increase self-belief, and celebration of achievements can help to reinforce the belief in the ability to overcome obstacles and be successful in what they are trying to achieve.

One particularly successful example of a programme which helps to encourage prisoners and positively affect levels of self-efficacy is that of Turning Pages, a peer-mentoring programme which takes place in the prison library. Implemented by the Shannon Trust, this scheme enables prisoners who can read well to teach those with lower literacy levels. This kind of programme has a significant impact on both learner and mentor. An evaluation of the programme found that it gave both learner and mentor hope for future attainments, and that learners observed “an increased in confidence in reading, their self-rated reading attainment, enjoyment and reading comprehension” (Hopkins and Kendall, 2017, p.5). Similar results were found in a separate study of prison-based peer education schemes, where prisoners were described as “untapped resources” who are “capable of having a powerful and positive influence on fellow offenders” (Deville et al., 2003, p.220). As well as positively affecting their sense of self-efficacy, this pro-social role can assist in providing a new identity as mentor or teacher rather than criminal or offender. Peer-learning opportunities are increasingly being recognised as a positive step in prisoner learning. Roth et al. (2016, p.52) note that “the more closely the prisoner identifies with the model, the greater impact on efficacy beliefs.”

### 2.7.5 Knowledge, skills and understanding

In unpacking the Museum, Libraries and Archives' *Generic Learning Outcomes*, Hooper-Greenhill (2004) details the myriad of ways in which museums, archives and libraries can impact upon the knowledge, skills and understanding of individuals. She looks beyond simply learning new facts and information, suggesting that such cultural learning experiences can contribute to "the development of a more complex view of self, family, neighbourhood or personal world" (p.164). Not only can individuals develop what Warr (2016, p.18) terms the "obvious and evident" benefits of learning (for example, literacy, numeracy and IT skills), but cultural learning experiences can help to develop social skills, emotional skills, communication skills and information management skills (Hooper-Greenhill, 2004, p.165). The importance of such skills is often overlooked by policymakers, whose main concern is that prisoners are practically equipped with the skills that lead to successful resettlement or qualifications required to improve employment prospects on release. These skills are, however, crucial for individuals who must first learn to navigate daily life in a challenging environment.

The social learning which takes place in a library setting, both through reading groups and literacy programmes, and through interaction with staff and other prisoners, has the potential to change perspectives, and promote understanding of and tolerance toward others. Reading groups in particular are designed to encourage deeper engagement with literature and the development of critical thinking skills, in a setting where these emerging perspectives are shared alongside others. A report of Books Unlocked (National Literacy Trust, 2016, p.6) found that reading groups provided "discussion, tolerance and empathy." This was reflected in the feedback provided from participants. One reader stated, "It's cool to share opinions and points of view. Helps me to understand other people's mentalities and understanding of life" (p.7). Another noted, "I like that it brought people of different areas of prison, some I've never seen...They have the most interesting things to say" (p.6). This again highlights the importance of the library environment, and how it can be a safe space for individuals to discuss issues without fear of judgment or criticism.

A well-equipped library is able to support a wide range of educational needs. The literacy level of individuals in prison is generally lower than that of the general population. Within the UK, it is estimated that 46% of prisoners have the literacy level of, or below, that expected of an 11-year old child (Hopkins and Kendall, 2017, p.3). The library is therefore mostly concerned with encouraging basic literacy development, in ways already outlined in this article. The library is also tasked with supporting the advanced educational needs of prisoners. Writing in 1973 about prisoners undertaking the GED and college courses in the United States, Gulker (p.55) was convinced that a good library could “humanize the environment” and “transform the unbelievably sterile atmosphere into a productive area for learning.” As the provision of both secondary and post-secondary education grows behind bars, so too does the need for prisoners to access scholarly information and for an environment conducive to this kind of learning. We are in a “time of revitalization in prison higher education” (DeLano Davis, 2017, p.690), but students in prison do not have the luxury of using an academic library. DeLano Davis goes on to note that prison libraries focus mostly on general reading and legal resources, rather than specialised academic texts (p.689). Both Sorgert (2014) and DeVanos (2017) offer valuable contemporary insights on specialised libraries within prisons and partnerships with university libraries which help to support these academic information needs. As opportunities for prisoner participation in Higher Education grows, this is becoming a more critical issue in prisons and it is recommended that further research be carried out to understand the information and educational needs of these prisoners and how best to address them (see section 8.5).

## 2.8 Conclusion

It is clear from the overview of desistance research offered in this chapter that, despite the inherent barriers imposed by incarceration, desistance is an ongoing process which can take place during custody and so we must try to facilitate this process in any way possible. It is therefore appropriate to consider the role played by the prison library in this narrative of change, and how library services may enable individuals to “imagine

and to embark on that journey” (McNeill et al., 2011, p.99). Many organisations and professionals working with prisoners have recognised the value of desistance research and the implications it has for the way they approach their services, and it is important for library services to do the same. Prison library literature has long argued that the library should not be dictated by prison goals and policies, which are often directly opposed to the principles and goals of the library. This way of thinking may be challenged if prison policymakers continue to take desistance research seriously. Regimes based upon opportunities for identity transformation and the developments of social bonds, and services built around the strengths of prisoners rather than their deficiencies, have much more in common with library philosophies than traditional prison concepts of control and punishment.

This chapter has discussed a number of ways in which the prison library benefits its users, based on an exploration of existing literature and policy documents. It has explored many of the services offered by the library and theorised how they may contribute, even in part, to an individual’s journey of desistance. The library offers a “positive socialisation experience” (Conrad, 2016, p.45), where bonds are created with other prisoners, staff members and family members. One of library’s greatest strengths is the potential to facilitate these relationships in a safe, neutral space which offers autonomy and responsibility for self, and opportunities for non-compulsory, informal learning. Similar to what Szifris et al. (2018) propose in their recent article on a general theory of prison education, the framework presented here acts as a starting point for both practitioners and researchers to consider more seriously the role and outcomes of the prison library. Grounded in library, educational and criminological concepts, it aims to strengthen the depth of theory in prison library research.

The prison environment is a challenging one and there are numerous restrictions faced by library workers in their day-to-day role of providing library services to prisoners. This original framework is not intended to be an idealistic model but is instead part of a theoretically and conceptually grounded roadmap to good practice. The value of discussing these theories is not only to increase knowledge, but to then “mobilize and transform theory from its abstract and institutional life into concrete ways of everyday

practice and being” (Gage, 2004, p.73). It is hoped that the framework will be a helpful tool for practitioners and researchers both to showcase existing benefits of the library and to develop future services. Prison library research cannot continue to be siloed, especially when it has potential significance for the broader areas of learning, wellbeing and desistance of those in prison. The next step is for researchers, working alongside prison library practitioners and other relevant service providers, to carry out empirical research that will refine and strengthen this model. This research project is the first step in doing so. The framework detailed in this chapter drives the design and analysis of this study, which takes a qualitative approach to exploring the experiences of prison library users and to understanding the role and value of the library within the wider experience of incarceration. Chapter Three will now discuss this methodology in detail, offering a justification for the adopted research approach and outlining the methods used to collect, analyse and present data.

## Chapter Three: Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an account of the methodological approach taken to address the key research questions and considers some of the challenges encountered when conducting prison-based fieldwork. It discusses the epistemological view that guided the research, before offering a justification of the chosen methodology. This is followed by a detailed discussion of the data collection methods used in Phases One and Two of the study. The process of data analysis is detailed and considered alongside issues of academic rigor and credibility of data. A reflexive account is also included to show how the researcher's personal characteristics, professional background and existing biases impacted on the research project, and to discuss the emotionality involved in prison-based research. Conducting research among vulnerable participants in a prison setting requires a sensitive and informed approach to planning and carrying out the fieldwork. The potential risks and ethical issues will be discussed in this chapter, along with an account of how access to each prison site and participants was negotiated. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the strengths and limitations of the research design.

### 3.2 Development of research questions

This research project initially set out to explore prisoners' engagement with library services, using an interdisciplinary framework to better understand the impact of the prison context both on the experiences of library users and on the practical provision of these services. Using a "progressive focussing" technique (Foster, 2006; Stake, 2010), research questions remained open to modification until the completion of the first phase of data collection and analysis. Foster (2006, p.79) notes that this "gradual refinement of research questions" is common in observational research, where certain questions have been theorised based on existing studies, but specific areas of interest are not yet identified at the outset of a study. Foster (ibid.) recognises that "theoretical



ideas develop in conjunction with data collection” and that early findings “then form the basis of, and provide the focus for, future data collection.” This is also in line with the flexibility inherent in case study research, which formed the second phase of this research project. The data collected from questionnaires and interviews with prison library staff in the first phase of fieldwork made clear the significant role played by the library in the informal learning experiences of prisoners and the inconsistency in levels of collaboration between library and education staff across different prison sites. It was then decided that another main focus of this research would be the role of the library in the prisoners’ educational experiences and how this was affected by the library’s relationship with the wider education department. This resulted in two main strands of inquiry throughout the research:

1. How might theories of desistance help us to better understand the outcomes of engaging with prison library services?
2. What role does the library play in the learning experiences of people in prison?

With these guiding questions in mind, the research is designed to address the following secondary questions:

- How have recent policy changes impacted upon the provision of prison library services in Northern Ireland and Scotland?
- How do staff members perceive the role and value of prison library services?
- How do prisoners perceive the role and value of prison library services?
- What informal learning opportunities are offered by the prison library?
- How does the relationship between the library and education department impact upon a prisoner’s experience of learning?

The remainder of this chapter offers a justification for the methods used to address these questions.

### 3.3 Research paradigm and approach

It is important to consider the research paradigm as it helps to contextualise the chosen research approach and design, providing “an understanding of the intention behind the action” (Pickard, 2007, p.13). This research was guided by an interpretivist position, which aims to provide insights into participants’ beliefs and their lived experiences from the subjective perspective of those participants (Cresswell, 2014, p.8). It takes the view that reality is socially constructed and seeks to understand how people interpret the world around them. The research presented in this thesis is an exploratory investigation which uses the above research questions to form a better understanding of prisoners’ experiences of library services and informal learning in the context of the prison. The research design pays careful attention to the deeply complex social environment of the prison setting, recognising that the experience of incarceration will have an impact on library engagement which would not exist in other library settings. As Willis (2007, p.99) highlights, “the goal of interpretive research is an understanding of a particular situation or context much more than the discovery of universal laws or rules”, the latter of which would be more consistent with a post-positivist approach to research. Adopting an interpretivist approach also acknowledges that not all issues can be identified at the outset of the study and that new questions are likely to unfold as the research progresses (Cresswell, 2014). This is in line with the progressive focussing technique used to develop the research questions in this study.

Within this interpretivist paradigm, the study takes a predominantly qualitative approach to exploring and understanding the experiences of both prisoners and staff. Qualitative research methods are used when exploring the “social construction of reality” and when seeking to “understand the subject’s point of view” (Wincup, 2017, p.4). Qualitative research also assigns significance to the social context of the research setting when trying to understand a phenomenon. While there has traditionally been a focus on longitudinal quantitative research in prisons to help determine “what works” in terms of rehabilitation and reducing recidivism rates, there is a growing body of qualitative criminological research which seeks to understand experiences and social

interactions of people in prison (for example, Crewe 2009; Liebling 2011). Desistance research in particular is concerned with understanding the processes of change which take place in the lives of individuals on their journey of desistance from crime, and these processes cannot be understood without in-depth conversations with the individuals. For Liebling (2015, p.18), what is important in prison research is “getting the description right” for we need to carefully convey the reality of the experiences of incarceration which are so hidden from public view. She recommends a combination of quantitative and qualitative research to accurately represent what takes place in prison (Liebling, 1999, p.164). The scope of this research did not allow for any significant quantitative data to be collected alongside qualitative case study data, although a small amount of quantitative data was collected in the initial phase of research when seeking to find out about the current level of library service provision across the UK and Ireland.

Within the field of library and information science (LIS), research has also traditionally tended to rely on quantitative methods of data collection. LIS is a relatively young academic discipline, having only emerged in the 1920's, and is still in the process of building a solid research foundation (Afzal, 2006). The field has been criticised for its lack of theory in published research and for instead being overly practical in nature (Grover and Glazier, 1986; Togia and Malliari, 2016). Within the more niche field of prison librarianship, similar criticisms have been raised. Both Stearns (2004) and Vogel (2009) recognised the need for more comprehensive research to be carried out from both within and outside the profession to provide empirical evidence about the value of library services which is grounded in relevant theoretical constructs. Such research would “enrich both the fields of librarianship and criminology” (Stearns, 2004, p.24). This dearth of empirical evidence of prisoners' experiences is one of the main reasons for taking a qualitative approach to this study. Any study which is concerned with the potential value and impact of library services must move beyond statistical research and speak to actual library users about their experiences. If we deal only with quantitative data, “there is a danger of only measuring what is measurable, and missing what is important about the library service” (Usherwood, 2002, p.119).

The exploratory nature of this study resulted in a two-phased approach to data collection. Findings from the initial phase of research helped to inform the subsequent case study design. The sections which follow describe the research design of these two phases, and offer a justification of the methods used at each stage.

### 3.4 Phase One: Staff perceptions and experiences

Data collection for Phase One of the study took place between March and June of 2018, and data was collected in two stages. An initial questionnaire was administered to prison library staff across the UK and Ireland, followed by telephone interviews with ten of the questionnaire respondents. There were numerous reasons for carrying out a broader inquiry of staff perspectives before conducting more focused case studies in Phase Two of the research:

- There exists little contemporary knowledge of prison library services across each jurisdiction of the UK and Ireland. A survey conducted by CILIP (the UK's Library and Information Association) in 2015 provides useful statistics about library provision in England and Wales. There also exists an in-depth qualitative study of prison library services in England and Wales but this was conducted over twenty years ago and the prison service has since undergone significant changes (see Stevens, 1995). Some contemporary knowledge of library provision also exists in the form of prison inspection reports or relevant written policies, but this information lacks any depth about how services are provided and perceived within the prison. A survey of prison library staff was intended to provide insight into the current level of provision across different jurisdictions and served as a helpful foundation to the research project.
- It was deemed important to include frontline library staff in the early stages of the research project. In choosing to first speak with practitioners, this approach followed Patenaude's recommendation for prison researchers to "involve the practitioner as a contributing stakeholder in the research endeavour" (2004,

p.74). Staff accounts of library management and delivery of services and their perceptions about the role and potential outcomes of library services helped to inform the second phase of research. The collected data pinpointed areas of interest to explore further in each case study. Findings also revealed areas of concern about the profession and hopes for research in this area, which was helpful in constructing a research project which would be relevant and beneficial to what staff identified as an overlooked sector within the library and information profession.

- The data collected in this phase of research helped to identify suitable research sites for case study fieldwork.

#### 3.4.1 Questionnaires

According to Pickard (2007, p.183), a questionnaire is “the single most popular data collection tool in any research.” It is a cost-efficient and relatively simple way to collect data, and is able to target participants over a large geographical area. This was particularly important in this research project, which aimed to gain an overview of library provision across the UK and Ireland. The questionnaire was distributed online via the JISC Prison Libraries Mailing List. Some printed copies were also distributed to staff during the CILIP Prison Libraries Training Day in May 2018.

The questionnaire consisted of a range of both closed and open-ended questions (Appendix A). Dichotomous and Likert-scale rating questions yielded data for quantitative analysis about prison sites and service provision. The open-ended questions enabled staff to clarify answers and offer their perspectives on certain issues, thus allowing some qualitative data to be collected.

The questionnaire was divided into four main categories:

- Institution and job role (demographic information)
- Overview of library services
- Relationship between the library and education department
- Purpose and value of library services

A total of 31 staff members responded across the various jurisdictions. Detailed demographics of the staff members and prison sites are provided in Chapter Four, which presents the findings from this phase of the study. The basic quantitative data collected here was not enough to make any substantive claims about prison library provision, nor was that the aim of what is primarily a qualitative research project. It did however provide a preliminary insight into how library services are delivered across prisons in the UK and Ireland and how the value of these services is perceived by staff members. This data is drawn on periodically throughout the findings chapters, where it serves to provide relevant context for the reader and where it helps to triangulate the qualitative findings which are the primary focus of the research.

Cohen et al. (2011, p.402) underline the importance of the wording used in questionnaires, noting that “pre-testing is crucial to their success.” The questionnaire was therefore piloted to ascertain the appropriateness and clarity of the wording used, and the relevance of the questions asked. The questionnaire was sent to three prison library staff in different jurisdictions before the final version was distributed. This pilot phase served as a reminder of the security issues around online access in prisons, even for members of staff. Following feedback from library staff, it was decided to use SurveyMonkey as a design tool rather than the initial choice of Microsoft Forms, as the latter could not be accessed by one member of staff. A Word Document version of the questionnaire was also attached to emails, in the case that they could not access the SurveyMonkey website. The responses which were returned using the Word Document were then manually transferred to SurveyMonkey.

This questionnaire helped to identify willing participants for follow-up interviews to explore staff perceptions in more depth. While questionnaire respondents had the choice to remain fully anonymous, they were asked to provide an email address if they were willing to take part in an interview. The opening section of the questionnaire served as both an information sheet and consent form and can be viewed alongside the questionnaire in Appendix A. Issues regarding consent and confidentiality are discussed in section 3.7.2.

#### 3.4.2 Interviews with library staff

While the open-ended questions on the questionnaire allowed for some exploration of staff perspectives, the interview was a more effective tool to delve deeper into their perceptions of library services and to further discuss certain issues which had been raised in the questionnaires. Denscombe (2010, p.174) describes three main kinds of information which can be elicited from interviews, each of which are applicable in this study:

*“Opinions, feelings, emotions and experiences, where the aim of the research is to understand them in depth rather than report them in a simple word or two;*

*Complex issues where the research focuses on complicated matters that call for a detailed understanding of how things work, how factors are inter-connected or how systems operate;*

*Privileged information where the opportunity arises to speak with key players in the field who can give particularly valuable insights and wisdom based on their experience or position.”*

Interviews were designed to generate a deeper understanding of staff experiences of providing library services to prisoners and their perception of potential outcomes for those who engage with these services. Early analysis of questionnaire data led to some alteration of the initial interview schedule, in order to explore further some of the

unexpected findings which had emerged. For example, answers about the level of liaison between education and library staff varied widely across prison sites and the researcher was keen to discuss the relationship between these two departments in more detail. Interviews facilitated further discussion on this topic, again showing the advantage of taking an iterative and flexible approach to qualitative research projects.

Each interview began by discussing library policy and management, offering insights into how library services were delivered within the wider prison context and partnerships with external organisations or local public libraries. The level of access to the library space was discussed, along with the range of resources and informal learning programmes and events offered by the library. Finally, staff members were asked about user engagement with library services and their perceptions of the benefits of library engagement.

#### 3.4.3 Data analysis

In line with the iterative nature of this research project, analysis was an ongoing process, with early findings influencing the design of subsequent stages of data collection. Findings from questionnaire data helped to inform the follow-up interviews with prison staff, and findings from this first phase of the study helped to inform subsequent case study design. The initial data collected from staff questionnaires was analysed and presented using both Microsoft Excel and SPSS. Once all questionnaires had been collected, the responses were initially imported from SurveyMonkey to Excel, where a spreadsheet was used to present the questions to each response individually. Excel was deemed the most appropriate tool for organising data and coding open-ended answers, as shown in Figure 7. In this example, staff members were asked how they perceived prisoners' attitudes toward the library to differ from their attitudes toward education classes. This figure shows how coding of these answers took place, and how the frequency of each code was noted.



	A	B
1	Q21: Perceptions of prisoner attitudes toward library/education	Frequency of answer
2	Library is recreational as well as educational	iiii
3	Reference to prior negative school experience	ii
4	Education is seen as punishment	i
5	Library is a place of enjoyment	i
6	Choice of attending library (voluntary)	iiiiiiii
7	Choice of how to spend time in library	iiii
8	Library as a social place	i
9	Amount of time spent in each	i
10	Classes can be long and dull	i
11	Difference in staff relationships	i
12	Classes are more structured	iiii
13	Difference in physical space	i
14	Library inclusive of learning abilities	i
15	Library has better book stock	i
16	Library as a source of assistance	i
17	Library is a more relaxed environment	iiii
18	Library is more informal	ii
19	Less pressure to achieve in library	i

**Figure 7.** Example of coding open-ended questionnaire answers using Excel

From this screenshot, it is clear to see that the main difference was in the voluntary nature of the library service and the choice of how to spend their time once in the library, followed by the recreational and more relaxed environment of the library space. All data was then imported to SPSS, which was considered the most efficient tool for generating basic descriptive statistics. Figure 8 offers an example of the descriptive statistics generated using SPSS. Cohen et al. (2011, p.606) note that descriptive statistics “make no inferences or predictions, they simply report what has been found, in a variety of ways.” Had the study yielded a larger number of questionnaire responses, data may have been further analysed to make predictions and correlations about library services. As the sample was relatively small and the aim of the questionnaire was simply to provide an overview of library provision, it was deemed appropriate that data should be analysed in this way. These results were displayed using graphs and are presented in Chapter Four, alongside some discussion of each answer and how the data helped to provide an overview of contemporary prison library provision.

### LIS Postgraduate Qualification

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	18	58.1	58.1	58.1
	No	13	41.9	41.9	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	100.0	

FREQUENCIES VARIABLES=FTE  
/ORDER=ANALYSIS.

### Frequencies

#### Statistics

Number of FTE staff in library

N	Valid	31
	Missing	0

### Number of FTE staff in library

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	3	9.7	9.7	9.7
	.50	2	6.5	6.5	16.1
	1.00	6	19.4	19.4	35.5
	1.50	3	9.7	9.7	45.2
	1.60	2	6.5	6.5	51.6
	2.00	10	32.3	32.3	83.9
	2.70	1	3.2	3.2	87.1
	3.00	2	6.5	6.5	93.5
	4.25	1	3.2	3.2	96.8
	5.00	1	3.2	3.2	100.0
	Total		31	100.0	100.0

**Figure 8.** Example of descriptive statistics generated using SPSS

The ten follow-up interviews were designed to find out more about the provision of library services in a prison setting and to explore staff members' perceptions of the role and value of these services. Each telephone interview was audio-recorded and notes were made after each interview to highlight any particular areas of interests or unexpected issues which arose. All interview participants were provided with an information sheet and consent form via email in advance of the interview, and consent forms were scanned and returned before the interview took place. The interviews were transcribed as soon as possible after the interview had taken place. It was decided to analyse this dataset thematically, making use of Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework to find meaningful patterns in the data which helped to answer the research questions (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Gathering staff members' perceptions was the first phase of a study which would later focus on prisoners' experiences of library engagement. This initial phase was exploratory in nature and, as there has been

little contemporary research on the perceptions of prison library staff members within the UK and Ireland, an inductive approach was taken to coding the data in which themes were selected based on data rather than to fit pre-existing codes (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Transcripts were printed and manually coded before being transferred to NVivo for more systematic coding at later stages of analysis. The process of analysis is outlined in the table below.

**Table 2.** Phases of analysis based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step approach to thematic analysis

Phase	Description of process
1. Familiarisation with the data	This began during the transcription of each recorded interview. Transcripts were printed, read and re-read by the researcher. Initial thoughts and potential important themes were noted down during this stage of familiarisation.
2. Generating initial codes	Codes were attached to sections of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire dataset. This was first done manually, before transcripts were transferred to NVivo for more systematic coding in subsequent stages of analysis.
3. Searching for themes	After identifying codes in the dataset, related codes were grouped together and sorted under potential themes (referred to as <i>categories</i> in this thesis).
4. Reviewing themes	All categories were examined and revised to make certain that they made sense in relation to the coded extracts

	and in relation to the entire dataset. This involved looking back at the research questions, and ensuring that the emerging categories were relevant to the aims of the study.
5. Defining and naming themes	This phase involved generating names and clear definitions for each category and sub-category and ensuring that these sub-categories interacted and related to the main category.
6. Producing the report	Each theme or category was then presented and discussed separately using compelling examples of quotes or tables to illuminate findings.

Final categories and sub-categories which emerged from the analysis of interview findings are presented alongside the questionnaire data in Chapter Four of this study, and offer an overview of contemporary prison library services, the challenges faced by library staff in providing these services, the level of collaboration between library and education staff and an overview of how staff perceive the benefits of library services for prisoners. Findings from both sets of analysis in this first phase of the study are later used to substantiate some of the case study findings. The following paragraphs provide a rationale for using a case study design in the second phase of this project and discuss the various methods used to collect data in each case study.

### 3.5 Phase Two: Case study design

Following these insights from prison library staff members, the second phase of this study aimed to explore prisoners' experiences of using library services and the potential value of these services. In order to get a more holistic view of prisoners'

experiences, it was decided that engagement with library services should be observed in a specific prison setting over a period of time, allowing for a better understanding of the social context in which these services are provided. Case studies were planned in two distinct prison settings, using a multi-method approach to data collection. These case studies can be described as instrumental case studies, in that they are intended to deepen understanding of a broader issue or theory and not just offer an understanding of the case itself (Stake, 1995).

In her discussion of qualitative case study design in the field of education, Merriam (1988, p.2) describes it as “an ideal design for understanding and interpreting observation of educational phenomena.” In this project, the phenomena under study is prisoners’ engagement with library services. Taking a case study approach also aligns with the exploratory and iterative approach used in this research project. Hartley (2004, p.324) emphasises the flexible nature of case study design in that “it is able to adapt to and probe areas of planned but also emergent theory.” This means that the “theoretical framework at the beginning may not be the same one that survives to the end” (ibid., p.328). This is significant, for the framework presented in Chapter Two has been used to help guide research design and analysis, but it is anticipated that the findings of the research will help to adapt and further refine this initial framework. Merriam (1998, p.41) further notes that the insights gained from case study research can be “construed as tentative hypotheses that help structure future research” and that the case study therefore “plays an important role in advancing a field’s knowledge base.” As noted in Chapter Two, it is hoped that the framework and findings presented in this research can serve as a foundation for future prison library research.

The case study approach has been criticised for its lack of generalisability to other cases (Stake, 1995; Punch, 2009). In responding to this criticism, Yin (2014, p.21) notes that the goal of case study research is “to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalizations) and not to extrapolate probabilities (statistical generalizations).” This is in line with the aims of this project, which seeks to further understanding of a unique phenomenon and build a stronger theoretical foundation to prison library research rather than to make any statistical generalisations about prison library users.

The argument against generalisability is also weakened by the use of two case studies and multiple methods of data collection within these case studies. According to Yin (2014, p.64), the “analytic benefits from having two (or more) cases may be substantial.” This project explores library engagement in two prisons, and makes use of three distinct methods in each setting: participant observation, semi-structured interviews with both staff and prisoners, and prisoner focus groups. The richness of these findings will be augmented by the findings from Phase One of the study, reflective field notes and existing literature and theory. The first case study took place at Hydebank Wood College and Women’s Prison in Northern Ireland and is followed by a case study at HMP Barlinnie in Scotland. As noted in Chapter One, each institution sits within a prison system whose overall organisational structure and strategy is heavily influenced by desistance research. The two sites hold very different populations, and these case studies are not intended to be comparative but simply to offer further insights into an under-researched phenomenon. Some comparison is made once the data has been fully analysed and findings are discussed, where it serves to show how different aspects of organisational structure can impact differently upon library provision. Full background to these sites and the findings of the case studies can be found in Chapters Five and Six. The recruitment of participants and the various methods used in each case study to triangulate data are outlined in the following paragraphs.

### 3.5.1 Observation and recruitment period

An initial period of observation was planned at each prison site, with the dual purpose of enabling familiarisation with the research site and prison regime and for the researcher to meet and begin to build some level of trust with potential staff and prisoner participants. This early observation period looked different at each site. More time was available to settle into the research setting at Hydebank before interviews took place. The set library timetable made it possible to spend an entire morning or afternoon with the same group of people in the library, giving an opportunity to casually converse with both the young men and the women prisoners and to observe the various activities and events which took place during these sessions. The same

luxuries were not afforded at Barlinnie. Bound by a stricter fieldwork schedule, only two days were spent becoming familiar with the prison site and meeting staff and prisoners before interviews took place. This experience was very different to that at Hydebank, as the library was not a space in which prisoners spent long periods of time and so most interactions with prisoners took place either in the radio station area or in the education department.

Due to the limited timescale and nature of the research setting, participation largely depended on who was willing to take part, and whose timetable allowed for participation during these weeks. For this reason, an opportunistic or convenience sampling approach was taken at each site – a common approach with conducting research with hard-to-reach populations such as people in prison (Abbott et al., 2018). This approach involves “choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents and continuing that process until the required sample size has been obtained or those who happen to be available at the time” (Cohen et al., 2011, p.155). At Hydebank, the initial period of observation in the library helped to build a rapport with library users and identify willing interview participants. An effort was made to speak both with people who enjoyed visiting the library and those who engaged less with its services. Eight interviews took place at Hydebank (five with young men and three with women) and one focus group took place with five female participants. Demographics of these participants are presented alongside the findings of this case study in Chapter Five. A further three interviews took place with staff members as well as two interviews with volunteers facilitating literacy programmes in the library. A final interview took place with a member of staff from the public library service in Northern Ireland (Libraries NI), which had been set up directly by email and took place in a public library setting. Due to restrictions within the prison sites, this was the only interview to be digitally recorded.

As the library at Barlinnie was only visited by prisoners for a short time each day, the majority of this fieldwork took place in the radio station area adjacent to the library, or in the education department which was located in a different area of the prison. As a result, recruited participants were either men belonging to the radio station working

party or men attending education classes. One interview participant worked in the prison gym and was recruited on the final day because he happened to be available and willing to discuss his experiences. Observation of an induction class in the education department led to the recruitment of two participants. Four others were recruited from an art class which was visited during the first week of research. The remaining three participants were men in the radio station working party who were keen to speak about their experiences. Interviews took place with four staff members in the prison and one external policymaker. Further details of these participants are outlined in Chapter Six.

### 3.5.2 Participant observation

Following a period of general observation of library services, participant observation methods were used to gain a fuller insight of prisoners' experiences of engagement with library services. Participant observation has been used in other arts-based prison research to better understand prisoners' experiences. Cox and Gelsthorpe (2012, pp.265-266), reflecting on their evaluation of prison-based music projects, considered participant evaluation to be "a powerful way of elucidating experience in this sense, which seeks to understand the meanings and organisation of social action." A similar study carried out by Digard and Liebling (2012, p.296) led them to conclude that "emotional and social immersion offers a chance for insight that would remain elusive via other methods." This is not an ethnographic study and so the social immersion within the library space could only take place on a small scale. It was facilitated by taking part in some of the library-based activities and programmes which were happening in the library during the period of fieldwork. An observation template was used to make note of details about the research setting, participants and activities taking place during each observation (Appendix D). This method proved more successful at Hydebank, where there was an opportunity to take part in a weekly shared reading programme with the young men in the library. The field notes from these observations turned out to be an invaluable for data triangulation. Both staff and students referred to this reading programme in their interviews and their accounts were corroborated by the observation notes in Appendix E. In Barlinnie, no such



events took place, although there was an opportunity to participate in an induction class in the Education Department. An account of this observation can also be found in Appendix E. The process of making field notes is discussed further in section 3.5.5.

### 3.5.3 Interviews

The benefits of using interviews as a research method have been outlined in section 3.4.2. In order to elicit a range of perspectives about the provision of library services and their outcomes, interviews took place with both prison and public library staff, education staff, volunteers and prisoners. Interviews with library and education staff members also provided valuable insights into the relationship between the library and the education department at each site, and prisoners' differing attitudes toward each service. Detailed demographics are provided in the respective findings chapters.

It was important to consider the location of prisoner interviews when trying to ensure privacy and confidentiality. The initial plan to conduct interviews in a library setting could not go ahead, as this would have disrupted the daily regime of visitors to the library. In Hydebank, it was decided to use an empty classroom space where only the researcher and the participant were present. Prison officers were stationed in the corridor outside the room. It was important to offer this level of privacy as "the risk of being overheard can be inhibiting for some respondents and may impact on the material they are prepared to share." (Wincup, 2017, p.108). Holding interviews in a classroom setting also prompted interviewees to speak about their surroundings and make comparisons about the space of the library and the space of the classroom. Interviews with staff members and volunteers took place in the library, for it was possible to make use of this space at lunch time when there was little chance of being interrupted by either prisoners or other staff members. Digital recording devices were not permitted at Hydebank and so brief notes were taken during each interview, and then written up fully as soon as the interview had ended. It was important to put the interviewees at ease, and writing consistently during the interview may have distracted participants or made them feel uncomfortable.

Finding an appropriate location for prisoner interviews was a more complex endeavour at Barlinnie. The first set of interviews with prisoners working at the radio station took place in a small side room within the Communications Hub. While no staff members were present, officers requested that the door be left ajar during the interview. Subsequent interviews took place at a table set up in the corridor of the education department, with officers stationed further along the corridor. While there was a sufficient amount of distance between the officers and the participants that the interview would not be overheard, it was still not an ideal setup. A final interview took place in a room close to the office of a senior staff member, again with the door propped open. The staff member was on the phone throughout the duration of the interview and it is unlikely that any of the interview was overheard. It is possible however that this situation affected the interview and that the perspectives offered by the participant were more positive than they may have been had he been completely out of sight and out of earshot of an officer. Similar experiences are recounted by Wincup (2017) where prison officers insisted on leaving doors open for the security of the all-female research team. She acknowledges that the choice of location “is often a compromise, although this should not be at the expense of putting either the interviewee or interview at risk” (p.108). It underlines the challenges of conducting prison-based fieldwork and the need to remain flexible and adaptable about the approach to data collection.

Interviews with prisoners were semi-structured, using a topic guide to focus the interview but otherwise respecting “the way the participant frames and structures the responses” (Marshall and Rossman, 2016, p.150). This loose structure helped to create an informal environment which aimed to contrast the negative experiences participants may have had during previous police or prison interviews. The purpose and format of the interview was clearly explained at the outset and some initial general conversation took place to ease participants into the interview setting. Participants were also asked to choose a pseudonym so that they would not be identified in the research. This was also used as an icebreaker at the beginning of the interview, and some of the young men at Hydebank particularly enjoyed choosing their own names. The interview schedule was informed both by the research questions and

aims of this study and relevant literature. It focused mostly on prisoners' experiences of both education and library services prior to incarceration, their experiences of these services during incarceration and their hopes for post-release. Following the advice of van Ginneken (2014, p.8), the seriousness of discussion topics was toned down as the interview drew to a close, in order to leave participants with "a positive feeling." Each interview therefore ended by drawing conversation back to the library space and asking, "What would you consider to be the best thing the library officers?" The interview guide can be viewed in Appendix B.

#### 3.5.4 Focus groups

Focus groups were carried out in each case study, both as a means of triangulating data and eliciting insights that "might not otherwise have been available in a straightforward interview" (Cohen et al., 2011, p.436). Although interviews generate important in-depth data, they are led by the researcher and the questions designed by the researcher. In a focus group, the researcher acts as a facilitator and the discussion is led by the group of participants. In this sense, it is considered to be a more flexible method of data collection and one where "the participants' rather than the researcher's agenda can predominate" (ibid.).

It was initially proposed that the focus group at each site would take place with individuals who had taken part in the informal learning programmes observed by the researcher. This did not go to plan at either site, and the need for adaptability in prison research again came to the fore. At Hydebank, a focus group had been arranged with the young men who attend the Reading Aloud sessions each week. On the day of the arranged group, a security incident in the prison meant that scheduled visits to the library and education department did not take place. A more spontaneous focus group later took place with women prisoners during one of their weekly afternoon library visits. There were five women present in the library and, as no scheduled events or activities were being run that afternoon, they agreed to take part in a focus group to discuss their perceptions of the library service. As only two women had been recruited

for individual interviews, this offered further valuable insight into their experiences of library engagement.

In Barlinnie, there were no informal learning programmes to be observed during the two-week fieldwork period and so a focus group was arranged with willing participants to speak more generally about their library and education experiences. All participants were part of a Higher Reading class in the education department, and the focus group took place in their classroom. Patton (2002, p.386) notes that “[t]he extent to which there is a relatively consistent shared view can be quickly addressed” in focus groups. This was perhaps the greatest strength of carrying out these focus groups, as common views and frustrations became quickly apparent amongst the participants at each site. These group discussions also served to validate some of the opinions shared in interviews and what had been noted during observation of library engagement.

One issue to consider when employing focus group methods is that of confidentiality. Although participants were encouraged to keep what had been discussed within the walls of the library and the classroom respectively, it was impossible to ensure that what they said would not be shared with others. The subject matter was not considered sensitive enough to make this a serious concern, and participants were made fully aware of this issue before agreeing to participate. A guide for these focus groups can be found in Appendix C.

### 3.5.5 Field notes

Qualitative research of this kind necessitates detailed reflections of the social setting and events which take place each day. According to Corwin and Clemens (2012, p.490) field notes can “provide a portal from the reader to the research setting” and can also “improve the trustworthiness of data...and limit misunderstanding from the text” (p.492). Reflexive field notes were therefore taken at the end of each prison visit about the various aspects of the day, any interesting observations of the prison regime and setting or significant interactions with staff and prisoners. Corwin and Clemens (2012,

p.493) warn against taking field notes when participants are present, as this might cause people in the setting to act differently. Taking notes during observation periods would have countered the efforts to build rapport and break down existing barriers between researchers and participants. Only once was the mistake made of taking out a notebook to write down an interesting statistic noted by the librarian. One of the young men in the library at the time became agitated and accused the researcher of noting down what he said. All future field notes were written outside of the fieldwork setting.

These field notes were later typed into a Word Document and uploaded to NVivo to be analysed alongside the rest of the dataset. Excerpts from these field notes have been included throughout the research both to provide further description of the research site and activities taking place in the library and where these observations can add credence to what has been said in interviews or focus groups.

### 3.5.6 Data analysis

The approach taken to analyse qualitative case study data was different from the thematic analysis of interview data carried out in Phase One. In line with the aims of this second phase of the project, a more hybrid approach to data analysis was taken. This approach was informed both by the philosophy of Layder's adaptive theory approach (1998) and the more practical steps to analysis proposed in the work of Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006). Layder criticises the grounded theory approach to analysis, acknowledging that all research is theory-laden and entered into with some prior theoretical assumptions and prejudices. Existing knowledge and assumptions should therefore be recognised and used to help strengthen the validity of the data collected. The potential of using this approach within criminological research is gaining momentum and has been adopted in a number of previous studies which consider individuals' experiences of a particular phenomenon within the prison environment (see Knight, 2015; Molnar et al., 2018; Szifris, 2018). In this study, the theoretical framework proposed in Chapter Two makes clear that some assumptions about the value of prison library services have already been articulated through the use of

existing literature and relevant theories from the fields of criminology, education and librarianship. This study follows Layder's suggestion of using this theoretical framework to produce "more powerful and adequate explanations of empirical data" (p.51).

A further strength of Layder's approach is that it places significance on the social context in which research is carried out. He acknowledges that social behaviour is composed of both subjective and objective aspects which condition and influence each other, and his approach "attempts to trace the reciprocal influences and interconnections between people's social activities and the wider social (systemic) environment in which they are played out" (1998, p.20). As this research explores individuals' engagement with library services in a prison context, it is particularly important to understand the impact of the wider prison environment and the lived experience of incarceration on prisoners' experiences of library services. In dealing with both behavioural phenomena (in this case, users' engagement with library services) and the systemic environment, adaptive theory helps to identify links between prisoners' engagement with library services and the context in which these experiences occur.

Layder recognises that specific methods used to collect and analyse data are dependent upon the research questions, and so does not propose a rigid set of rules to follow. The steps taken to analyse data collected in these case studies follows more closely the work of Fereday and Muir-Cochrane whose approach used both a pre-existing codebook based on the research questions and theoretical framework of their project whilst also "allowing for themes to emerge direct from the data using inductive coding" (2006, p.83). A hybrid technique of deductive and inductive analysis was therefore used in this study, taking into account both existing knowledge and theory and leaving room for the development of new themes to emerge from the raw data in each case study.

In line with this hybrid approach, a codebook was created to help guide analysis of each set of case study data. These pre-defined codes were informed strongly by the theoretical framework laid out in Chapter Two, as well as the findings of Phase One of the study, the study's research questions and a preliminary reading of all case study data. The codebook created for each case study also offers a clear audit trail, improving the transparency and credibility of the study (Bowen, 2009). The dataset was read and re-read with this codebook in mind, with existing codes being assigned to relevant chunks of text. Repeated readings of transcripts and field notes led to the revision of some codes as well as contributing new codes to the codebook, which is referred to by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006, p.87) as the phase of "applying template of codes and additional coding." This inductive approach to coding allowed unexpected categories to emerge. Figure 8 shows an excerpt from the codebook of the Hydebank case study. Following the example provided by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006), this table includes the label of each code, a description of how to recognise the code within the dataset and an example of text to which the code refers. The table also shows how a mixture of descriptive and in vivo codes were used to label sections of text. Descriptive coding uses a word or short phrase (such as *library as escape*) to summarise "the basic topic of a passage" (Saldaña, 2013, p.88). In vivo codes consist of "a word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative data record" (ibid., p.91). In the following example (Figure 9), the library was twice explicitly referred to as a *dumping ground* which was then used as a code to describe any instance where the library was seen as place to send prisoners when they had nowhere else to go.

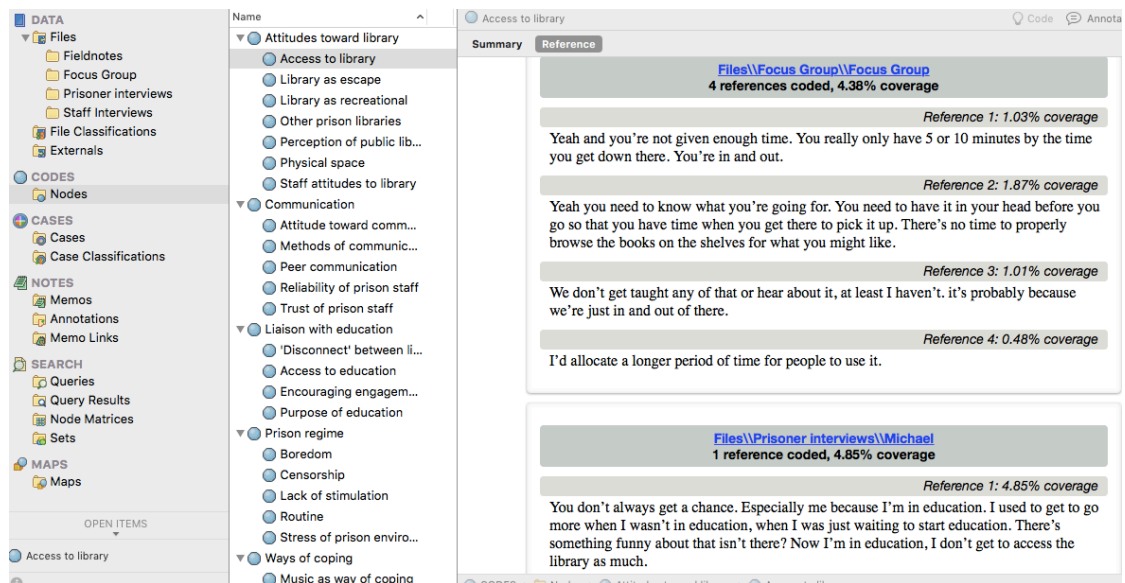
Label	Description	Example from data
Library as escape	Any reference made to library as a temporary means of 'escape' within the prison or to the resources provided by the library offering some 'escape' to prisoners	<i>I think for me it's just taking a break. I like coming here. It's a break from work and classes.</i>
Library as refuge	Any reference made to the library as a place of refuge or 'safe space' for prisoners, or observation of prisoners using library as safe space.	<i>I was told that when he first came in, he wouldn't leave the library. He didn't want to mix with the others and he spent weeks sitting in the library and not participating in other classes.</i>
Library as "dumping ground"	Any reference made by staff or prisoners to the library as being treated as a "dumping ground" for students who either do not fit into the timetable or whose classes have been cancelled.	<i>Sometimes people are just kind of deposited in here because they don't know where else to put them, and it's clear they don't want to be here. That's frustrating, because I don't want this to be something that's forced on them, I want it to be a choice and something they enjoy.</i>

**Figure 9.** Excerpt of Hydebank codebook

The final codebooks for both Hydebank and Barlinnie can be found in Appendix H. Although it was assumed the initial codebook developed for the Barlinnie case study would be similar to that of Hydebank, reflections on the fieldwork process and early readings of the dataset made clear that this was a very different site whose findings would differ greatly from that of Hydebank. The initial codebook was altered accordingly, but the ensuing process of deductive and inductive coding of the data was repeated in the same way. At this point, the codebooks were imported to NVivo in order to better organise the dataset and to make it easier to carry out the next step of "connecting the codes and identifying themes" (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006,



p.89). The screenshot below offers an insight into how NVivo helped to organise the final codes of the Barlinnie dataset:



**Figure 10.** Screenshot of NVivo coding process, HMP Barlinnie dataset

The next step was to systematically categorise these identified codes. Similar to the approach taken in Phase One, a phase of axial coding helped to cluster these codes into sub-categories and core categories (see examples in Appendix H). These were adapted and finalised through repeated reading of the transcripts and ensuring they were relevant to the stated research questions. Analysis then proceeded to an interpretative phase, where the main themes or categories were considered alongside existing theory and literature to help explain findings. These findings were used to help refine the initial framework, which is discussed in detail in Chapter Seven. The iterative cycle and systematic methods of data analysis add academic rigour to the study and the use of this theoretical framework helped the research go beyond mere description of prisoners' experiences to make claims about the role of the library in the wider prison context.

### 3.6 Reflexivity

While a certain level of reflexivity is necessary in any qualitative social research project, it is particularly important when carrying out prison-based research. Even when seeking to be objective, it is likely that the researcher will enter into the study with preconceived ideologies and opinions about incarceration and the criminal justice system that may affect their judgment. It is also inevitable that a high imbalance of power between the researcher and participant will exist, for the fieldwork is taking place with vulnerable participants who live in a controlled environment which inherently limits their power to make autonomous decisions. A researcher needs to be aware of the social characteristics, experiences and assumptions they bring to the research and their potential impact on both the collection and analysis of data. Understanding the “role of the self in the creation of knowledge” is vital in a qualitative study (Berger, 2015, p.220). Reflecting on these beliefs and biases enables the reader to see the impact of these factors on the research data. In this sense, it can help to bring transparency to the study and increase the credibility of the findings.

Reflexivity is becoming increasingly common in prison-based research in an effort to aid “interpretation of the field and the construction of knowledge about the prison” (Earle and Phillips, 2015, p.233). Alongside acknowledging how their beliefs and characteristics can impact upon the study, prison researchers are also encouraged to acknowledge the emotions involved with conducting research in prisons and how these emotions can contribute to the understanding of the prison context (Jewkes, 2012; Rowe, 2014). Liebling (1999, p.164) goes as far as to say that the emotions involved in this research can be considered to constitute data. Such accounts can also support future researchers in the field, giving them an idea of the challenges and sometimes emotional trauma which is involved when researching in the prison environment (Jewkes, 2012). It is important that such accounts are not simply written for exposure’s sake but to show how experiences and emotions have impacted upon the study. They should not read as a “confessional or testimonial exhortation” (Phillips and Earle, 2010, p.363) but should instead “prioritize what other researchers can learn from their fieldwork experiences, and what these experiences reveal about substantive

issues, rather than about themselves” (Crewe, 2014, p.401). The account which follows underlines the specific social characteristics, assumptions and professional experiences of the researcher which are considered to be relevant to this study. It also discusses the emotional impact of the research experience on the researcher and the extent to which this impacted upon data collection and analysis. As it is a personal reflexive account, it is written in the first person.

### 3.6.1 Impact of the researcher on the research

Prior to carrying out this doctoral project, I qualified as a library and information professional and worked in academic libraries for three years. My professional experience in the library sector and belief in the value of library services is what drove me to carry out this research, and is perhaps the main bias I carried into this research project. I was careful to design open-ended questions which would allow participants to speak freely about their engagement with library services, including negative experiences or perceptions of the service. I recognised the potential danger of finding favourable research findings because of my professional interest in library services. This was also countered by a rigorous process of data analysis, detailed in sections 3.4.3 and 3.5.6.

Having a background in librarianship also served a more positive practical role when conducting fieldwork. This was first noticeable when interviewing prison library staff in the initial phase of the study. My professional background offered a common ground with library staff, and there was little suspicion surrounding the aims of the projects nor a reluctance to take part. Interviewees seemed happy to participate and to talk at length about the services they offered. They were open in expressing their frustrations about working in a prison setting and they seemed to genuinely appreciate that research was being done in this area that might highlight the services they provide. This librarian identity also played a role in the fieldwork carried out in prisons, particularly when trying to build a rapport with prisoner participants. Initial suspicions around my presence in the library and the reason for my research seemed to be quelled when library staff informed them that I was also a librarian and not in any way

related to the prison service. This was particularly welcomed in Hydebank, where library users had a strong rapport with library staff and seemed to trust her opinion of people. This also served to show the prevailing attitude of prisoners toward library staff, which became a main finding in this study.

My ideological stance toward imprisonment was another bias which had the potential to impact upon the study. I follow the widely accepted view in criminology and sociology that prisons “are inherently damaging as regardless of the quality of regime or facilities, the vast majority of people leave prison more damaged or have a more fractured life than when they entered” (Costelloe, 2014, p.30). My belief about incarceration was actually summed up well by one of the male students at Hydebank:

*“This doesn’t help. It doesn’t stop us reoffending. Hydebank only shows us what it’s like when you commit a crime and get locked up. Why don’t you show us what a different life would look like? In here only makes you worse...I don’t know but prisons don’t work. They should only have them for really high profile prisoners.”* (Conor, Hydebank)

The main way in which this impacted upon data collection was my own reaction to staff comments, particularly from officers who spoke derogatively of prisoners or made comments which stood in stark contrast to my own beliefs about incarceration. Crewe and Levens (2015, p.129) recognise the danger of this when they state, “Our attempts at the honest representation of our subjects can be diverted by many otherwise admirable objectives, including political ideology, theory and humanisation.” As I was seeking to understand the role of the library within the wider prison environment it was important to constantly reflect on my experiences and not to let my own thoughts about incarceration skew the picture I painted of each research setting. It was also important to recognise that it would not be possible to remain completely objective nor remove my own beliefs from this study. As Galdas (2017, p.2) notes, the qualitative researcher is “an integral part of the process and final product, and separation from this is neither possible nor desirable.” Galdas recognises

that the main concern is whether or not “the researcher has been transparent and reflexive” (ibid.), which is what I have aimed to be in this study.

It is important to note the implication of being a female researcher conducting a study in an institution which holds young men and women prisoners (Hydebank) and adult men (Barlinnie). Mixed experiences have been recounted by female prison researchers, with Liebling (1992) noting the openness of prisoners being interviewed by a woman, and Piacentini (2005, p.202) also noting how she was seen as “non-threatening” because of her gender. These were similar to my own experiences of working mostly with male prisoners. While some of the young men made inappropriate comments related to my gender and appearance in the initial few days of fieldwork, these comments soon subsided as they became familiar with my presence in the library. It was often more challenging to speak with the female prisoners at Hydebank. This was particularly true with some of the young women who seemed suspicious about a stranger being present in their library sessions. This is similar to Piacentini’s experience of working female prisoners. She noted that they were “distrustful of my position and motive” and “being a woman was more of a hindrance in the female relationships I tried to build” (p.203). I conversed more easily with some of the older women, with whom I participated in bookfolding activities and discussion groups. This difficulty in building rapport could also have been because I was afforded less time to spend with women prisoners. In general, the young men were scheduled for more frequent and longer visits in the library and so more time was spent trying to build a rapport with this population of library users. The implication of this was that only a small sample of women were willing to be interviewed, and the findings presented in this thesis relate mostly to the experiences of the young men at Hydebank. This is unfortunate because women are so often overlooked in prison research, but it did make me determined to carry out a future research project which focuses only on women’s experiences of library engagement.

The experience of being a woman in an adult men’s prison (Barlinnie) was slightly different. The staff here were protective of me and I was escorted by a male prison officer at all times. Staff were stricter here about being alone with prisoners in an

interview setting and I had to be quite assertive when explaining how the presence of staff members could sway interview answers. I was treated respectfully by prison participants during interviews and focus groups. There were mild disruptions during one set of interviews which took place in the education department, when some students would knock the windows of the adjoining classrooms or make gestures at us. These were simply ignored and did not affect the interview. Despite being more nervous about the carrying out fieldwork at Barlinnie, particularly as this was a new prison to me and I was not familiar with the regime nor the staff, the fieldwork period passed without incident or any feelings of unease. There appeared to be a strong staff-prisoner rapport throughout the prison which made it a comfortable space to be in.

### 3.6.2 Impact of the research on the researcher

I had previously carried out a research project on family literacy programs in prison as part of my MA dissertation. This required visiting a number of prison libraries, so I was somewhat familiar with the prison environment and did not consider myself to be “going in green” without knowing what to expect (Sloan and Wright, 2015, p.143). Although the research was being carried out with vulnerable participants in a potentially volatile environment, the focus of the study was not a particularly sensitive topic. The interviews sometimes took a more serious tone when participants were, for example, speaking about their family members or discussing issues of mental health and wellbeing during incarceration. At no point did an interview have to be paused or did a participant request to withdraw.

The most challenging aspect of the Hydebank case study was both hearing about and witnessing the low levels of mental health and resulting episodes of self-harm and suicide attempts prevalent in the prison, particularly among the young men. The experience which affected me most was noted in the second day of my fieldwork reflections:

*The first student I spoke with in the library today had visible fresh cuts across both arms and was reading a book about tattoo designs. When I started*

*chatting to him about the book, he said he was trying to find things so he could get the scars on his arms covered up. This led to discussions with staff members about self-harm incidents and suicide attempts within the prison. They spoke in detail about one particular incident which I'm finding hard to get out of my head. (Field notes, 12 September 2019)*

I had a good support system in place, and was able to speak both to good friends and my supervisors following this experience. It certainly gave me more of an insight about the wellbeing of young people at Hydebank and the challenges they face, and made me consider further the role of the library space and resources in supporting wellbeing. This was further highlighted during a conversation with one staff member who commented:

*"You can fill their days with cooking and barbering and goats and gardening and education, but they're still locked up in their own minds at night, still haunted by past members and still locked up and feeling useless." (Field notes, 12 September 2019)*

Such conversations and experiences prompted me to reflect again on my feelings toward incarceration and the purpose of the study. There was a kind of internal conflict which took place over the period of my time at Hydebank, which was recorded in the same diary entry:

*It makes me feel disheartened by my research, even though I can see that the library is an important space for the young men in the middle of all this. I'm torn again between wanting to make prison services, such as the library, better for those using it to improve their experience and contribute positively to their wellbeing in any way possible, but at the same time knowing the dangers of prison as an institution - and if we make these services better, will they strengthen the justification of its existence? (Field notes, 12 September 2019)*

I returned often to a statement of Angela Davis when these thoughts crept in. Speaking of the prison abolition movement, she notes that a “major challenge of this movement is to do the work that will create more human, habitable environments for people in prison without bolstering the permanence of the prison system.” (2003, p.42). This internal conflict also appeared when I reflected on the inside/outside dichotomy which exists in any kind of social research, where the researcher has no personal experience of what is being studied. My reflections from my second day of fieldwork also show the emergence of this power dynamic:

*I am torn about my own position as researcher and realise how hard I am trying to chat normally to everyone to break down the researcher/participant divide. But I'm worried that even the general chats I have in the library with prisoners will be construed as me wanting to find out more or analyse them for my research. One woman asked me, "so are you doing this as an assignment? To get marks for uni?" ...Sometimes I'm left with the feeling like I'm stepping temporarily into their challenging world with little right to do so. (Field notes, 12 September)*

The reflexive process did not stop at this initial reflection. As Treharne and Riggs (2015, p.60) note, “personal reflexivity involves an ongoing process of questioning the relevance of your identity in forming how the research proceeds.” Reflexive field notes were taken at the end of each prison visit, which not only described the events of the day but made note of how my own beliefs and prior theoretical knowledge impacted upon my developing thought process throughout the period of data collection. Relevant excerpts of these field notes have been included throughout the findings chapters.



### 3.7 Ethical considerations

Roberts and Indermaur (2008, p.309) describe prison research as “an area fraught with ethical challenges.” Any research involving vulnerable participants is complex and requires sensitive and well-informed planning, but many of the potential risks and concerns are further exacerbated when this research takes place in a prison setting. As well as overcoming initial obstacles of accessing prison sites, researchers must give careful attention to issues of coercion and the difficulty of speaking to participants in a private and confidential setting. The process of gaining ethical approval for this research project stretched over a period of ten months, with an initial proposal sent to the NIPS research committee in October 2017, and final approval gained from both the NIPS and the SPS in July 2018. Early setbacks led to a revised research design and repeated negotiations with research committees and prison gatekeepers. In detailing this process, the following paragraphs outline some of the ethical considerations associated with prison-based research and the challenges that must be overcome to successfully conduct a credible qualitative study in this area. Initial fieldwork with prison library staff by means of questionnaires and telephone interviews was not such a complex process and so is only considered briefly before focusing on the more challenging phase of conducting prison-based case studies. The table below offers a timeline of the process taken to gain final ethical approval for each phase of research, and supporting evidence can be viewed in Appendix I. Ulster University necessitates that all research involving human participants receive ethical approval before commencing a research project, and so both phases of research were subject to appraisal by Ulster University’s Research and Ethics Committee (UUREC).

**Table 3.** Timeline for receiving ethical approval

Date	Action Taken	Outcome
April 2017	Submit “One Day Clearance Form” to NIPS and application form to UUREC for approval to visit Hydebank Wood College and discuss research with relevant staff members.	Both applications approved. Visit Hydebank with two supervisors to meet with relevant staff members.
October 2017	Submit ethics application to UUREC.  Submit research proposal to NIPS Research Committee.	UUREC approves proposal (with minor revisions)  Proposal rejected by NIPS (November 2017)
May 2018	Revised application submitted to UUREC for both phases of research.  Separate applications submitted to the research committees of the Irish Prison Service, the Northern Ireland Prison Service and the Scottish Prison Service to conduct case study research.	May 2018: Approval granted by UUREC for first phase of research with library staff.  June 2018: Approval granted from the NIPS for case study research.  July 2018: Final approval gained from UUREC, after minor revisions, for case study research.  Approval also granted from the SPS for case study research.  IPS did not respond to application form.
May – June 2018	Phase One of research takes place (Questionnaire and interviews with prison library staff members)	
October – November 2018	Case study research takes place in Hydebank Wood College (Belfast) and HMP Barlinnie (Glasgow)	

### 3.7.1 Phase One ethical approval

As the first phase of research was conducted only amongst prison library staff members and did not require physical access to prison sites, the process of gaining ethical approval was relatively straightforward. The main concerns involving this fieldwork were that participants fully understood the nature of the research and what they were required to do, how the results of the research would be used and disseminated and to assure them of full anonymity and confidentiality in any publications. All information sheets and consent forms for this early phase of research can be found in Appendices F and G.

An information sheet was provided at the beginning of the online questionnaire, along with contact details of the researcher and supervisory team should the participants wish to seek further information about the project. It was made clear that by completing and submitting the questionnaire, respondents were giving consent for their answers to be used in the study. It was possible for these questionnaires to be completed anonymously, and many participants chose to do so. Those who were willing to participate in follow-up interviews were asked to provide an email address at the end of the questionnaire, but again participants were assured that these details would be seen only by the researcher and not used to identify participants. Although job titles and categories of prisons were noted, a careful effort was made not to include any details which may identify either the respondent or the institution in which they worked.

All interview participants were provided with information sheets in advance of their interview and were afforded the opportunity to ask further questions at the beginning of each phone or video call. Consent forms were emailed to participants and these were signed, scanned and returned to the interviewer before interviews took place. Privacy is noted as a particular strength of telephone interviews (Carr and Worth, 2001; Sturges and Hanrahan, 2004) and indeed these interviews were subject to less disruptions or distractions than subsequent interviews which took place in the prison setting. To ensure this level of privacy, interviewees were either in a private office or

empty library space when the call was taking place. The confidentiality of these participants was again prioritised, and it is not possible to identify the participant or their institution in this thesis.

### 3.7.2 Phase Two ethical approval

The main challenges arose when conducting the second phase of research, which consisted of empirical research in prison settings. As noted above, the process for gaining ethical approval was not straightforward and the rejection of an initial proposal to the NIPS necessitated a change in research approach. Full ethical approval for the final design of this phase of study was granted by the NIPS in June 2018 and by UUREC and the SPS in July 2019 (Appendix I).

#### *3.7.2.1 Negotiating access*

In his reflections on conducting a prison-based research project, Patenaude (2004, p.73) notes that the “greatest challenge facing researchers doing prison research is gaining entry to the field.” The timeline presented in Table 4 shows the difficulty of gaining access to sites in this research project. The initial plan for this project was to carry out one in-depth case study of the library service at Hydebank Wood College in Northern Ireland, which would have taken an ethnographic approach and been carried out over a number of months. In an effort to include relevant stakeholders in the design of the research, a preliminary visit to Hydebank was organised to speak with library and education staff. This visit was approved both by UUREC and the NIPS and took place in April 2017. The staff were enthusiastic about the research, especially as there was little existing published knowledge of the services provided by the library in Hydebank. A meeting was also arranged with Libraries NI staff members at this time, to ensure that relevant public library staff members were also involved in the design of the research. Following these conversations, a final proposal was drawn up and submitted both to UUREC and the NIPS in October 2017 to carry out this ethnographic piece of research. Following minor amendments, the proposal was approved by UUREC in October 2017. The proposal was however rejected by the NIPS, who

stated that they were unable to facilitate the project because of the amount of current research projects taking place across prison sites which were impacting on the daily regime of staff and prisoners.

By the time this decision had been reached by the NIPS, further review of literature had taken place and the researcher had benefited from networking opportunities at a range of prison research events and conferences. A revised proposal was drafted, taking into account the comments from the NIPS research committee and the possibilities that had since opened up to carry out research in other jurisdictions. It was decided that smaller-scale case studies could take place in various prison settings in jurisdictions where the criminal justice system was committed to supporting the desistance of prisoners. Applications were made to carry out these case studies in the Northern Ireland Prison Service, the Irish Prison Service and the Scottish Prison Service. The NIPS approved this revised proposal for a smaller case study at Hydebank in June 2018. Approval was also granted from the SPS in July 2018. Despite repeated correspondence, no decision was ever received from the IPS and so it was decided to commence research at the prison sites in Northern Ireland and Scotland. Further negotiations with relevant prison staff members took place to decide exact sites and the practicalities of the fieldwork. It was finally decided that fieldwork could take place at Hydebank Wood College between September to October 2018 and that the fieldwork at HMP Barlinnie would take place over a period of two weeks in late October 2018.

#### *3.7.2.2 Informed consent*

Gaining informed consent from participants is highly important in prison research, as this is a vulnerable population who are at risk of being coerced or exploited in research studies (Mobley et al., 2007; Chwang, 2009; Thomas, 2010). This piece of research seeks to give a voice to prisoners' experiences with no ulterior motive than to learn more about their engagement with library services and informal learning opportunities. To ensure that participants understand both the reason for and the implications of the research, easy-to-read information sheets were provided at the

beginning of each interview and focus group. Wincup (2017, p.50) notes that it is necessary when carrying out criminological research to “reflect upon their target population and possible barriers to communication.” Recognising the prevalence of low literacy levels in prisons, information and consent forms were first discussed with library staff to ask for feedback about the language used and to ensure that they were easy to understand. Both forms were also read aloud to participants, who were given the opportunity to ask questions about the study before consenting to participate.

Given the coercive nature of the prison environment, it was important to make sure that no individual felt obliged to take part in the study. It was made clear from the outset that participation was entirely voluntary, and that their participation or refusal to participate in the study would have no impact on any aspect of their prison life. It was also noted that the interview could be stopped at any time and they could opt out of the study. Information sheets and consent forms were also provided to staff members before interviews took place (Appendices F and G).

### *3.7.2.3 Confidentiality and privacy*

The British Sociological Association Statement of Ethical Practice (2017, p.6) states that all participants “should understand how far they will be afforded anonymity and confidentiality.” It is particularly important to explain this to people in prison who may fear the interview process and the risk of their data being shared with other prison staff members or even people outside of the prison setting. Participants were assured of the priority given to anonymity and confidentiality in this study. Each interview and focus group participant was asked to choose their own pseudonym, for the dual purpose of an icebreaker activity and of remaining anonymous. Any potentially identifying comments made during interviews have been removed to further ensure anonymity. This was deemed especially important when working at Hydebank, which has a small population - particularly of women prisoners – where publishing certain information about past education or family members could make it easy to identify an individual. Wincup (2017, p.55) warns qualitative researchers to “tread carefully between the lines of sufficient contextual information and preserving anonymity.” This

applied equally to staff members at Hydebank. As there is only one member of library staff at Hydebank, it would be easy to identify this individual in the research. It was decided to label this staff member as an “education staff member” along with other teachers at Hydebank in order to preserve anonymity. The transcription of interviews and field notes by the researcher ensured further confidentiality, as no-one else was able to view the original transcripts. Audio files of interviews which took place with staff members outside the prison were stored on password-protected files on the researcher’s laptop, with printed material kept in a locked office drawer.

As outlined in the British Society of Criminology Code of Ethics (2015), it is essential to ensure that potential physical or psychological harm or stress to participants is minimised. Prisoner interviews and focus groups centred mostly on experiences of education and the use of the library space, resources and informal learning programmes. While the study does not focus on a sensitive topic, it was recognised that any discussion of experiences related to incarceration had the potential to cause distress to some participants. This risk was mitigated by ensuring that all participants were fully informed about what the research required, and assuring them that they were not obliged to answer any questions they did not wish to answer and that they could stop the interview at any point without consequence. It was decided that if participants were deemed to be particularly vulnerable or high risk on the day of the interview that the interview would not go ahead. This did prove to be the case in Hydebank, where two planned interviews did not go ahead due to the young men being classed as high risk on the days the interviews were due to take place.

Harm to the researcher and potential risks of carrying out fieldwork in a prison setting with a potentially volatile population was also considered when planning the study. The gender of the researcher was highlighted as a concern, for it has been noted that gender issues can “be more striking in interactions between female researchers and male prisoners” (Beyens et al., 2015, p.72). A reflexive account of how being a female researcher impacted upon the study is outline in section 3.6.1. The initial observation period at each site helped to establish the researcher as a recognised figure in the prison library, providing time to build some level of trust with library users before conducting interviews and focus groups. Prison protocols were

explained by senior prison staff members before the commencement of fieldwork, and staff members were on hand to escort the researcher through the prison. Library and education staff members were present during the observation of education classes and library programmes. While the presence of staff members during interviews and focus groups could negatively affect the openness and honesty of participants, the room was always in the view of staff and it was easy to alert staff members if necessary.

While it was disappointing not to have been permitted to carry out the initially planned larger case study, the redesign of the project prompted the inclusion of a first phase of study with library staff across the UK and Ireland. The findings from this phase were more significant than anticipated, helping to identify areas of concern in the profession, further shaping the research questions, informing the latter phase of case study research and ultimately strengthening the validity of the overall findings in this project. It is hoped that the findings of these smaller case studies, along with the initial staff perspectives, will serve as a foundation to and propeller of future large-scale ethnographic research into prison library services.

### 3.8 Strengths and limitations

The primary strength of this research project lies in the interdisciplinary approach it takes to theorising about and understanding the significance of library services for those who are incarcerated. Existing prison library research is mostly descriptive in nature, and has been confined solely to the field of library and information research. This study broadens understanding of library users' experiences by drawing on relevant criminological and education research to shed light on the social context of the prison and how this impacts upon library engagement. The combination of a strong theoretical framework and empirical data collection to better understand prisoners' experiences is something which has been missing from the field of prison library research. The results of this study will therefore contribute not only to the field



of library and information research, but also to prison education research and the wider body of general prison-based research.

Another strength of the study lies in its multi-method approach and resulting triangulation of collected data. The methods presented in this chapter have shown the range of ways in which perspectives were collected from both staff members and prisoners in order to get a more comprehensive view of library service provision at each prison site. The time spent observing and participating in library-based and education activities further enhanced the validity of the claims made by the participants. Not only was data triangulated within each case study, but the findings from the first phase of data with prison staff members across the UK and Ireland helped to further explain some of the case study findings. This was particularly true when discussing the level of collaboration between library and education staff and the differing attitudes which prisoners had toward the library and toward more formal education classes. This allowed for more general claims to be made about the findings, which may not have been possible if the study had consisted of only the two case studies.

A final noteworthy strength of this case study relates to the geographical location of the case studies. As noted in Chapter One, the small amount of UK-based prison library research which does exist focuses on the prison system in England and Wales (Stevens, 1995; Field, 2008; CILIP, 2015). Existing knowledge about prison library services in Northern Ireland and Scotland stem either from individual inspections reports or short sections within relevant policy or strategy documents and so this study will shed light on contemporary provision in each prison service. Recent changes made to education provision in both the NIPS and SPS, and wider strategic changes in each prison service which seek to support the desistance of prisoners further underlines the timeliness and importance of this project.

As noted in this chapter, the initial proposal for this study could not go ahead and a revised approach to fieldwork had to be taken at quite a late stage during the period of research. This resulted in two small-scale case studies taking place over a number of

weeks in two prison sites, rather than the initially planned ethnographic piece of research in one prison site. This would have allowed for a larger and more diverse sample of prisoner participants. It is noted however that carrying out two case studies allowed for the possibility of the generalisation of findings (see section 3.5), especially when considered alongside the findings of the first phase of the study.

The revised approach not only resulted in smaller-scale case studies, but a limited amount of time in which to design the case studies. Although staff at each site were consulted about the research methods, a longer timeframe would have given both staff and prisoner participants the opportunity to help design the case study. It has been suggested that a collaborative approach should be taken to research design in prisons, not only with staff and stakeholders but also with prisoners, so that the research design can be “tailored to the issues, needs, and capacities of a given setting” (Gostin et al., 2007, p.129). It is recommended that any future research projects carried out in this field work more closely with prisoners so that they are given a role in this collaborative process and can help to design a more relevant study. The fieldwork at each research site was confined to the library and education department. Being able to observe prisoners’ engagement with other spaces in the prison would have been advantageous, enabling corroboration of the comments made about the distinct nature of the library space within the prison environment.

There was also a lack of demographic information collected about participants, so it was not known, for example, how age or ethnicity or cultural background impacted upon prisoner experiences of library services. It was decided not to collect such information because of the small sample of prisoner participants in each case study. On reflection, it would have been helpful to collect some biographical details to add further meaning to some of the comments made by prisoners. All participants were asked about their level of education prior to incarceration and their participation in prison education programmes, but statistics gathered from the prison about enrolment in education could have been collected to add credibility to the information shared in interviews.

### 3.9 Ensuring research quality

In addressing the issue of quality in qualitative research, Treharne and Riggs (2015) focus on three facets of the research: personal reflexivity and end-user investment; the transferability of findings; and triangulation. They also add transparency as a facet which is common to all types of research. By outlining the methodological approach taken in this study, this chapter has shown the ways in which these elements have been achieved. The table below offers a summary of how each step of the research process, including research design, data collection and analysis, and presentation of findings, have demonstrated research quality.

**Table 4:** Ensuring research quality

Personal reflexivity and end-user involvement	<p>Reflexivity is addressed both by providing a thorough reflexive account in section 3.6 and through the ongoing reflexive notes made at each stage of the fieldwork process. Excerpts from these notes are included throughout the thesis.</p> <p>Surveying and interviewing prison library staff in Phase One of the study facilitated early input from stakeholders, identifying the challenges they face as professionals in this area and their hopes for the research project. Relevant stakeholders were also consulted at the beginning of each case study and research methods were discussed before any data collection took place. A recognised limitation of the research is the lack of input from prisoner participants in shaping the research design. Had more time been available at each case study site, closer collaboration would have taken place with all participants to inform the study. This has been noted as a recommendation for future research projects (section 8.5).</p>
Transferability of findings	<p>Transferability of case study findings has been discussed in section 3.5. The fact that two case studies were carried out allows for stronger analytic generalisation of findings (Yin, 2014). The population at each site was very different and this must be</p>

	<p>taken into account if transferring findings to another setting.</p> <p>Findings related to the impact of the prison setting on the provision of library services and the management of prison libraries are perhaps more transferable in this study. This is also because of the findings of the first phase of the study, which gathered data from</p> <p>prison library staff across a wider range of institutions (n=31).</p>
Triangulation	<p>Triangulation of case study data was achieved by cross-referencing field notes and observation notes with interview and focus group data. Further triangulation of findings was achieved by referring back to Phase One data, which allowed for more generalisation of statements made about the management and delivery of library services and the perspectives of library staff.</p>
Transparency	<p>This thesis has provided a detailed description of the rationale for the project, the development of research questions, justification of the methods used to collect and analyse data and presentation of findings. A clear audit trail is provided, with the codebooks for both case studies and examples of axial coding provided in Appendix H. Findings are supported by the use of verbatim quotes from participants. Enough detail is provided that the reader should be able to clearly see how the findings and conclusions were reached.</p> <p>The research approach and findings have also been presented at conferences and university seminars over the past three years. This allowed for input from experts in the fields of education, librarianship and prison research, which is important as transferability depends on how useful the findings are to researchers in similar fields.</p>

## Chapter Four: Library staff perspectives

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings from the first phase of the research study. One aim of this initial phase of research was to generate an overview of contemporary library provision across prison sites in the UK and Ireland, and contribute to much of the now outdated research of services in these jurisdictions. This phase was also designed to uncover staff perceptions about the role and value of the library services they provide. The collected data, along with general conversations with library staff at the end of each interview, underlined their concerns for the profession and their hopes for stronger research in this area. The findings also reveal staff perceptions of prisoners' engagement with library services and their view of the potential outcomes of this engagement.

In line with the progressive focussing approach taken in this study, findings of this phase of research pinpointed areas of interest and importance which helped to further shape research questions and inform the design of the subsequent case studies. Indeed, results from this phase revealed previously unanticipated findings about the relationship between library and education staff which then became a main focus of the study. The following sections present the findings from both questionnaire and interview data with staff members. In detailing these findings, this chapter beings to address the following secondary research questions:

- How do staff members perceive the role and value of prison library services?
- How do prisoners perceive the role and value of prison library services?
- What informal learning opportunities are offered by the prison library?

While the viewpoints of staff members provide valuable insights into prison library engagement, it is necessary to hear first-hand from library users before determining

any potential outcomes of using library services. This will be a focus of the second phase of research.

#### 4.2 Questionnaire findings

The questionnaire distributed to prison library staff consisted of a combination of 25 closed and open-ended questions (see Appendix A). This allowed basic quantitative data about service provision to be gathered, whilst also giving staff the opportunity to clarify answers and expand upon certain issues. Questions were designed to provide a snapshot of library provision across different jurisdictions and the range of resources and programmes offered by libraries. Another key aim of the questionnaire was to identify willing participants for follow-up interviews that would examine staff perspectives in more depth.

The questionnaire was divided into four main categories:

1. Institution and job role (demographic information)
2. Overview of library services
3. Relationship between the library and education department
4. Purpose and outcomes of library services

The following paragraphs discuss each category in turn, though at times different questions have been grouped together where it is in the interest of illuminating the findings. SPSS was used as a tool to store and analyse quantitative data. Open-ended questions were coded and also added to the SPSS database to produce descriptive statistics. Questionnaire respondents are simply referred to by number throughout this section e.g. Respondent 1, Respondent 2. Direct quotations have been used either to illustrate the themes which emerged or where they serve as an exception to common findings (Corden and Sainsbury, 2006). Although there will be some discussion of the findings here, the full discussion of all research findings and their links to existing literature and theory can be found in Chapter Seven.

#### 4.2.1 Demographic information

The data collected in the first section of the questionnaire revealed the diversity of the institutions represented. Responses were collected from each jurisdiction in the UK and Ireland:

- Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, England and Wales (HMPPS)
- The Scottish Prison Service (SPS)
- The Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS)
- The Irish Prison Service (IPS)

It is not possible to state an accurate response rate as it is unclear how many staff are currently working in prison libraries and how many would have received the questionnaire. The main method of distribution was via the JISCMail email service for prison library staff, and 31 responses were collected. It is however possible to determine the percentage of prisons represented in each jurisdiction, and a breakdown of this information is shown in Table 5. This table also indicates how many responses came from public sector prisons (PSP) and private prisons. While the majority of prisons in England, Wales and Scotland are public sector prisons, others are contracted out to private companies such as Sodexo, Serco and G4S Justice Services (Ministry of Justice, 2017). These prisons are still subject to inspection by the HM Chief Inspectorate of Prisons and must adhere to prison rules, meaning that they are still legally required to provide access to a library space and library services. It is necessary to differentiate between institutions as there may be implications for how each library is funded and managed, and the range of services and resources offered to prisoners at each site.

**Table 5.** Breakdown of prison sites represented in questionnaire

Region	Type	No. of prisons	No. of responses	Percentage (%)
<b>England/Wales</b>	PSP	104	17	16.3
	Private	14	5	35.7
	Total	118	22	18.6
<b>Scotland</b>	PSP	13	6	46.2
	Private	2	1	50.0
	Total	15	7	46.7
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	PSP	3	2	66.7
<b>Ireland</b>	PSP	12	1	8.3

The highest percentage of represented sites were in Northern Ireland and Scotland respectively and these responses helped to provide some initial context and background information before the two case studies were carried out in these jurisdictions. As noted in section 1.3.1.2, prison libraries in Ireland are understaffed and there was no way of distributing questionnaires across sites with no library staff members. The one respondent from the Irish Prison Service was a staff member responsible for overseeing a number of prison libraries in a particular area of Ireland who was contacted directly by email to complete the questionnaire. A range of security categories were also represented across the different regions, including Category A/High Security (9.7%), Category B (35.5%), Category C (29%), Category D/Open Prison (3.2%), Mixed Categories (19.4%) and one Young Offenders Institution (3.2%). No female only prisons were represented, although two of the sites held both male and female prisoners. The results are therefore strongly based on library provision for male prisoners.

Table 6 shows the number of libraries managed by their local Public Library Authority (PLA) and those who come directly under the management of the prison. Libraries in the “other” category are managed by external organisations who are contracted to run both public and prison library services in the local area. It is clear that the local PLA is



responsible for the service delivery of libraries in most public sector prisons. Interview findings later reveal that there is a kind of “dual management” between the prison and the local PLA and this has significant implications for both staff experiences and others’ perceptions of the library service.

**Table 6.** Overview of prison library management

		Library management			
		Local PLA	Prison	Other	Total
Type of prison	PSP	21	2	2	25
	Private	2	4	0	6
	Total	23	6	2	31

While some prisons have only one member of library staff on site, the data collected showed an average of 1.5 full-time staff working in each library. A range of job titles were represented in the questionnaire (see Table 7). Only half of respondents held a postgraduate library and information qualification. Despite both national and international guidelines recommending employment of professionally qualified library staff (Forster, 1981; Lehmann and Locke, 2005), this is similar to the findings of the Big Question survey carried out by CILIP in 2015 which noted that 41% of prison libraries were managed by someone with no librarianship qualification (CILIP, 2015, p.9).

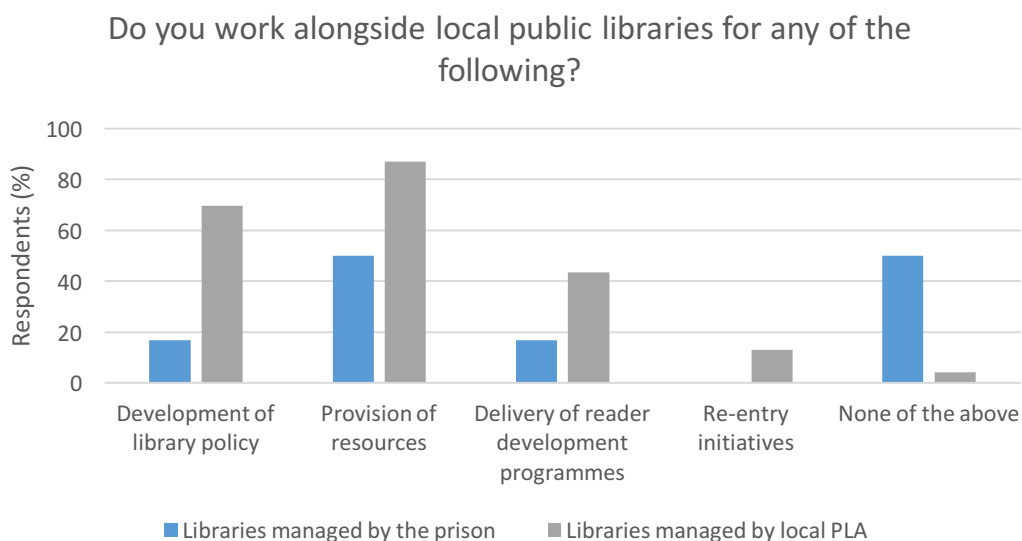
The table below offers an overview of all respondents and collated details of the sites at which they work. Prison categories have not been identified in Northern Ireland as this would easily identify the specific institution and the specific staff member.

**Table 7.** Demographics of questionnaire respondents

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Job Title</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Prison Category</b>	<b>Public/Private prison</b>	<b>Library management</b>
1	Prison Librarian	Eng/Wales	D	Public	PLA
2	Prison Librarian	Eng/Wales	B	Public	PLA
3	Prison Library Manager	Eng/Wales	B	Private	PLA
4	Librarian	Eng/Wales	C	Private	Prison
5	Library Services Co-ordinator	Scotland	Mixed	Private	Other
6	Librarian	Eng/Wales	Mixed	Public	PLA
7	Prison Library Manager	Eng/Wales	C	Public	Other
8	Librarian	Eng/Wales	C	Public	PLA
9	Prison Librarian	Eng/Wales	B	Public	PLA
10	Library Manager	Eng/Wales	A	Public	PLA
11	Network Librarian	Scotland	Mixed	Public	PLA
12	Offender Outcomes Unit Manager	Scotland	A	Public	PLA
13	Library Manager	Eng/Wales	B	Private	Prison
14	Prison Officer (Library)	Scotland	Mixed	Public	Other
15	Prison Librarian	Eng/Wales	B	Public	PLA
16	Prison Librarian	Eng/Wales	C	Public	PLA
17	Prison Librarian	Eng/Wales	C	Public	PLA
18	Library Manager	Eng/Wales	B	Public	PLA
19	Library and Information Co-ordinator	Eng/Wales	B	Public	PLA
20	Network Librarian	Scotland	Mixed	Public	PLA
21	Librarian	Scotland	Mixed	Public	PLA
22	Library assistant	Scotland	A	Public	Other
23	Library Supervisor	Eng/Wales	B	Public	PLA
24	Prison Librarian	Eng/Wales	B	Public	PLA

25	Librarian	Eng/Wales	B	Private	Prison
26	Library Supervisor	Eng/Wales	C	Public	PLA
27	Development Librarian	Eng/Wales	C	Public	PLA
28	Senior Librarian	Ireland	B	Public	PLA
29	Development Librarian	Eng/Wales	C	Public	PLA
30	Prison Officer/ Librarian	Northern Ireland	N/A	Public	Prison
31	Librarian	Northern Ireland	N/A	Public	Prison

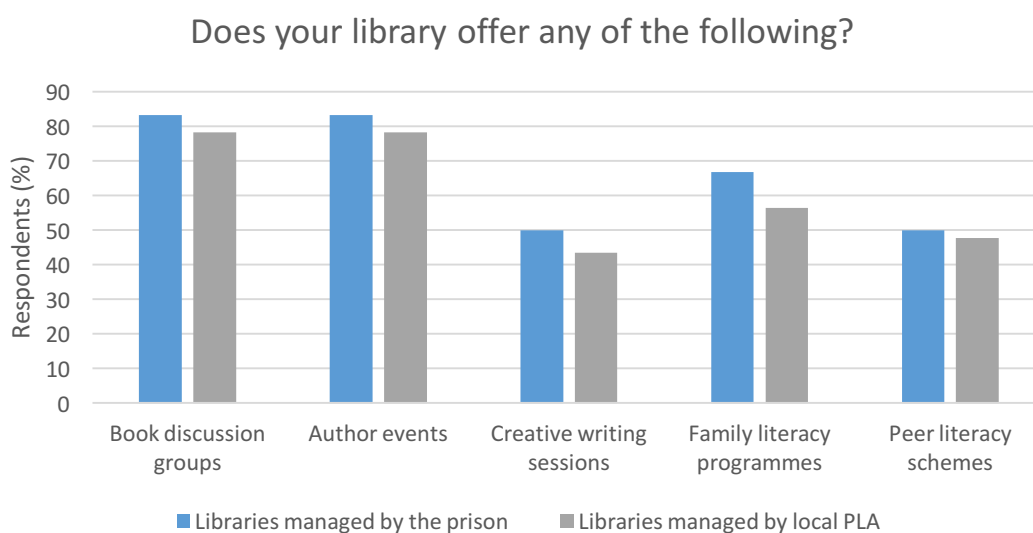
#### 4.2.2 Overview of library services



**Figure 11.** Liaison with public libraries

The ways in which prison libraries work alongside public libraries is outlined above. Unsurprisingly, libraries managed by their local PLA work more closely with those managed by the directly by the prison. Half of those managed by the prison had no communication with local public libraries. The most common support from public libraries was through the provision of resources, followed closely by the development

of library policies. Only 13% noted working together with libraries on re-entry initiatives. When later asked if prisoners were encouraged to use public libraries once released from prison, 61% responded positively and only 7% answered that this was not at all discussed with prisoners. Ways in which prisoners were encouraged to use the library on release ranged from simply promoting outside services to prisoners, to ensuring that they are signed up and provided with a library card before release. This would only be possible if the prison library worked in close cooperation with the local public libraries, and shows a long-term advantage of having this level of liaison. Respondent 14 noted a “*joint venture*” between the prison and PLA where public library staff visit the prison and show a PowerPoint presentation to prisoners about the services available to them and encourage them to become members. A positive response was also provided by Respondent 19, who stated that staff from the nearby public library “*report an upsurge in registration from former inmates.*” Respondents 15 and 29 who noted that they only “*somewhat*” promoted public library use acknowledged that they hoped to develop a closer relationship with public libraries in the future.

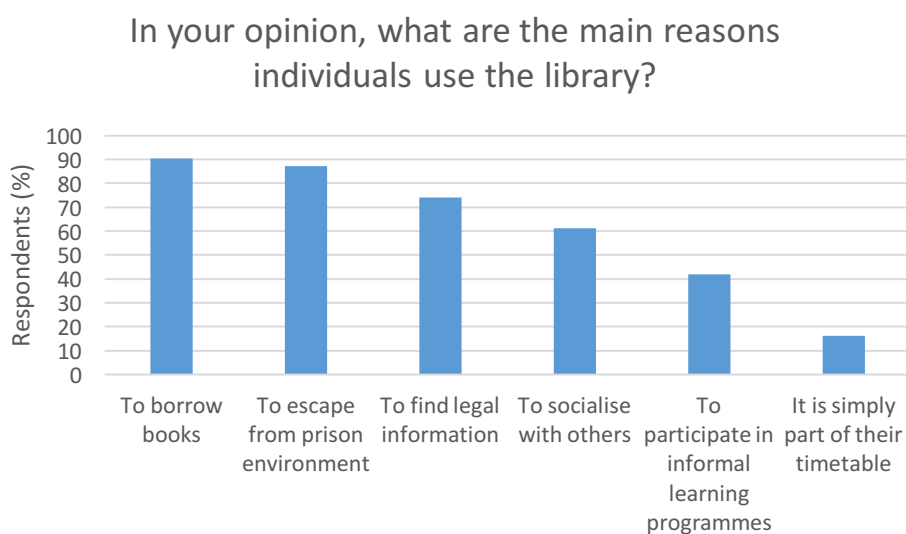


**Figure 12.** Programmes offered by the prison library

Staff members were asked about the variety of informal learning programmes and events offered by their library (Figure 12). There was very little difference in the level

of services provided by libraries managed directly by the prison and those managed by their local PLA. Only five libraries offered access to some kind of virtual learning environment, although six respondents noted that this was provided by the education department rather than the library. There was a general agreement that prisoners did not have sufficient access to IT resources in the library (74% of respondents). This lack of access to IT or online resources underlines the digital inequalities experienced by prisoners, whose efforts toward self-development and educational attainment are so often impeded by this digital exclusion (Reisdorf and Jewkes, 2016).

Library staff were also asked to indicate the main reasons that prisoners might choose to visit the library and engage with library services (Figure 13). The open-ended answers provided by respondents indicated again the wide variety of recreational, educational and socialisation opportunities facilitated by the library.



**Figure 13.** Reasons for using library services

Additional responses:

- to borrow DVDs and CDs;
- read newspapers and magazines;
- to enter competitions or reading challenges;

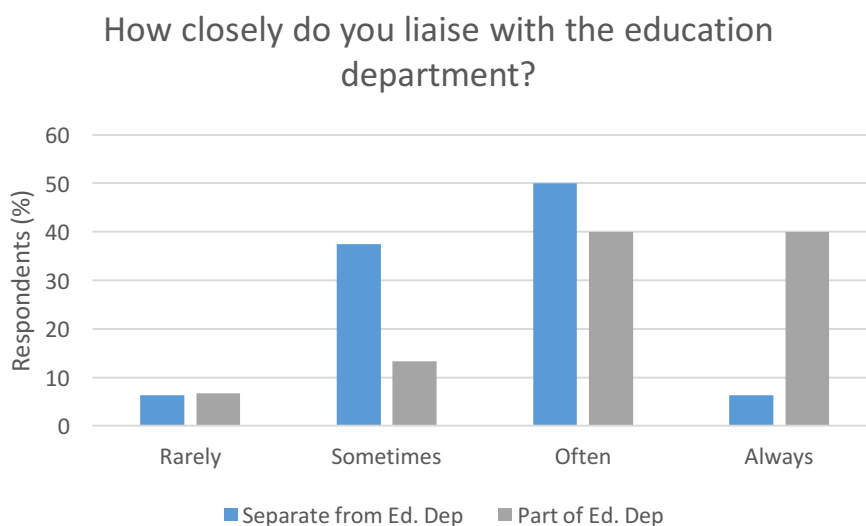
- to complete assignments for distance learning/Open University courses;
- to use the library PCs;
- to engage in e-learning programmes;
- to record stories for their family;
- to learn sign language;
- to attend events.

#### 4.2.3 Relationship with the education department

This section of the questionnaire arguably yielded the most interesting and varied results, which were then explored further in subsequent interviews with staff members. Respondents were asked if the library was officially considered to be part of the education department in their prison setting, to which 48% stated yes and 52% stated no. A follow-up question asked whether they personally felt that the library was part of the wider education department. Six respondents differed in response to this question. For example, although Respondent 23 noted that the education department was seen by others as a *“separate entity”* to the library, she very much considered the library to be part of the education department: *“Absolutely! And I have fostered relationships with individual tutors and support their classes where I can.”* In contrast, Respondent 25 (working in a private prison) noted that while the library was officially seen as part of the education department in the prison, she did not view it in this way: *“We are never included in class planning, or with individual prisoners’ learning plans.”* Other reasons for feeling separate from the education department included:

- physical location. (For example, Respondent 9 commented, *“As the Education Department is a long way from the library it is a bit too much of an effort to use the library by education staff and their students.”*);
- different service providers;
- lack of communication or integrated planning.

However, even those considered to be separate from the education department acknowledged that they worked together at times, as shown in the figure below:



**Figure 14.** Liaison between the library and the education department

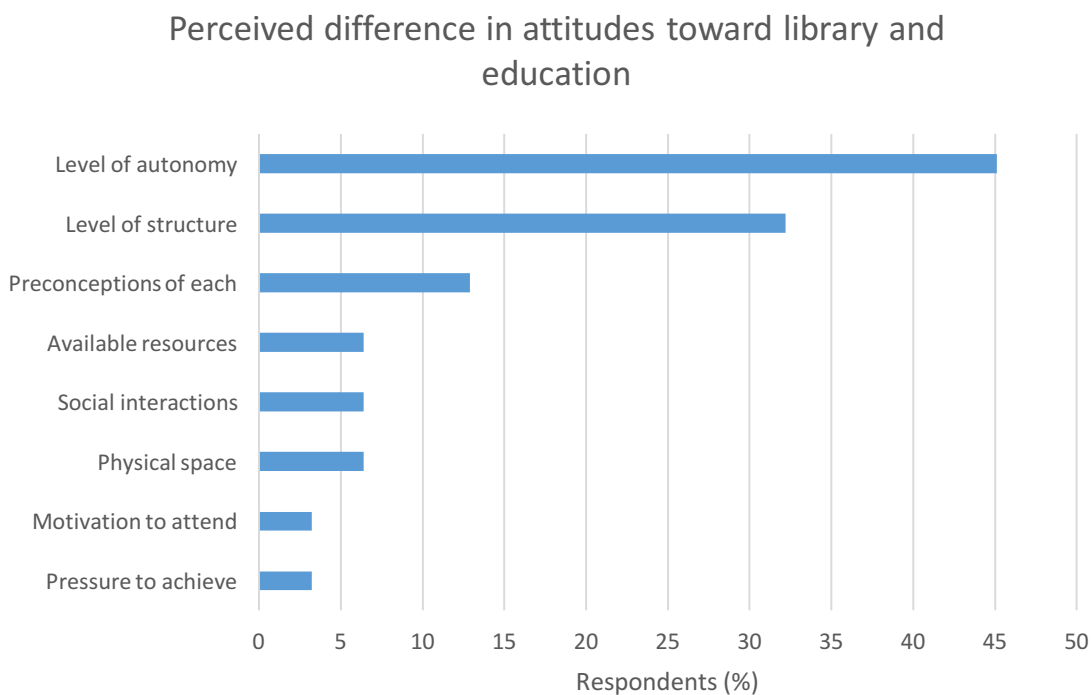
It was pointed out that the consistency and level of liaison “*very much depends on personalities*” (Respondent 25) and “*tends to happen informally depending on the individual teaching staff*” (Respondent 6). Open-ended responses indicated the various ways in which they worked together to support prisoners:

- some classes are held in the library, most notably English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and literacy classes;
- class visits to library to conduct research;
- working together on certain literacy projects e.g. reading challenges, Storybook Dads, book discussions and creative writing sessions;
- run author/speaker events together;
- work on projects run by visiting university departments;
- liaise with art teachers on competitions;
- attend relevant meetings together;
- share good practice stories.

These examples of collaboration and of barriers to effective communication between library and education staff and the implications of this relationship for prisoners' experiences of learning become a main theme of this thesis. As discussed in previous chapters, the prevailing belief is that prison libraries "should emulate the public library model" (Lehmann and Locke, 2005, p.4). IFLA's guidelines proceed to say at that the same time, the library should be "providing resources for prison education and rehabilitation programs" (ibid.). The Council of Europe's *Recommendations on Prison Education* (1990) also discuss the crucial role of the prison library in supporting the education of prisoners. The question then is not so much if the library plays a role in the educational experiences of prisoners – they clearly do – but to what extent this necessitates close liaison or even integration with the prison's education department. Questions are also raised about how staff members can successfully navigate this relationship, particularly when the library and education department often come under the management of different service providers and may be located in separate areas of the prison. This is addressed in more detail during the second phase of this research project. The case study presented in Chapter Five offers insights into a library service which works closely alongside the education department and the impact this has for service provision. In contrast to this, the second case study presented in Chapter Six discusses a prison site where there is little communication between library and education staff. The findings from these two case studies, along with the findings presented in this chapter, lead to important discussions about this liaison between departments and about the role of the library in the wider learning experiences of people in prison.

Another interesting strand to this relationship is prisoners' differing attitudes toward the library and the education department. The majority of respondents (77%) believed that prisoners' attitudes toward the library differed from their attitudes toward the education department. Coding of open-ended questions presented the main reasons for these different perceived attitudes and can be seen in Figure 15.





**Figure 15:** Differences in prisoners' attitudes toward the library and education department

“Preconceptions of each” refers to how the very terms *education* and *library* are perceived by prisoners, even before engaging with these services. It was noted that some individuals in prison will have had negative experiences of school prior to incarceration and might view education as “*punishment*” (Respondent 2), whereas the library is more likely to be viewed as a place of recreation or enjoyment. There were also repeated references to the informal nature of the library and how this contrasted to the more formal and structured nature of classes:

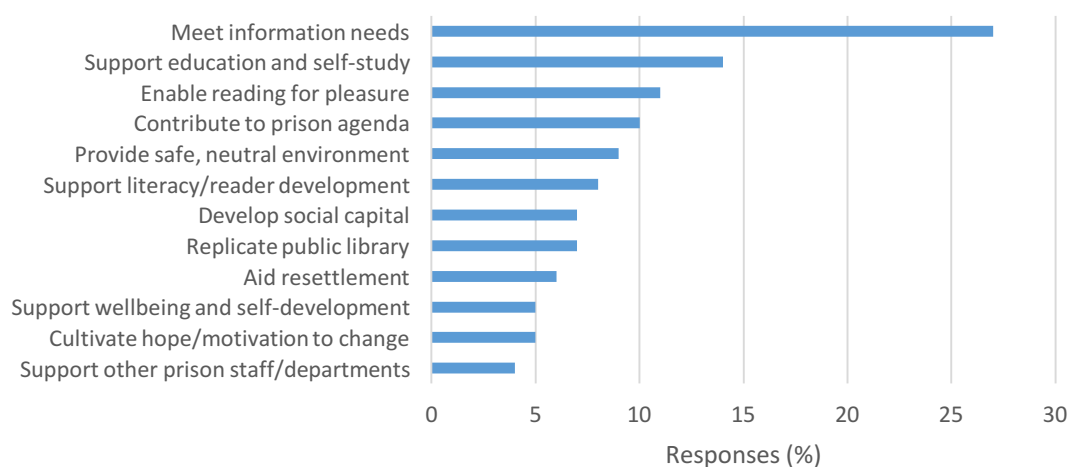
*“The library offers a comfortable, relaxed environment where offenders can exercise choice about the activities they are involved in and the materials they engage with. It is an informal learning environment. Education classes are structured because of the formal learning offered. A prison library is as similar as we can make it to a public library and is often seen as ‘a bit of the outside on the inside.’”* (Respondent 19)

The most common response related to the autonomy and freedom of choice experienced in the library space. This included the freedom to choose whether or not to actually visit the library. More often than not, visiting the library is voluntary while education classes are mandatory in some prisons. It also refers to the freedom to choose how to spend their time once in the library space, or which educational and recreational interests to pursue through reading material or DVDs. Respondent 2 concludes that the library *“is a different environment and it’s a venue where their choice is paramount.”* This finding is not surprising, for it is a common thread throughout both prison library and education literature. Both Stevens (1995) and Garner (2017) found this experience of autonomy to be central in prisoners’ positive engagement with library services. This is discussed further in the two case studies and is an important discussion when considering how library services can help to support the desistance of prisoners. Prison research has shown that opportunities for autonomy are important both for survival in prison and for the desistance process and so the role of the library merits attention, for its space and services have long granted opportunities to practice autonomy within a controlled and restrictive prison regime.

#### 4.2.4 The purpose and value of library services

The final section of the questionnaire posed a number of questions designed to uncover staff perceptions about the role of the library and potential outcomes of engaging with library services. An open-ended question asked outright what staff members considered to be the main objectives of the library. The various responses were coded and categorised, as shown in Figure 16.

### What do you consider to be the overall objective of the prison library?



**Figure 16.** Staff views of prison library objectives

In line with existing literature and policy documents, the most common response was to meet the information needs of prisoners, closely followed by supporting their education needs and reading for pleasure. Respondents also referred to the distinct, neutral space offered by the library. According to Respondent 7, the library aimed to be *“a welcoming oasis within what is undoubtedly a very difficult environment”* and it is described by Respondent 9 as *“an oasis of calm in a noisy, smelly and difficult environment.”*

When later asked directly about the physical space of the library, 88% of staff members strongly agreed with the statement that the library offered an important space in the prison environment. Beyond the provision of resources and space, staff members outlined what they considered to be the deeper implications of these services. They had the potential to develop social capital, particularly in relation to maintaining family ties and promoting family literacy development. In a series of Likert-scale questions about the value of the library, all staff members agreed that the library had the potential to positively impact family relationships. Responses were also unanimously positive about the potential of the library to expose individuals to different cultures and ideas, and to offer hope and motivation for change.

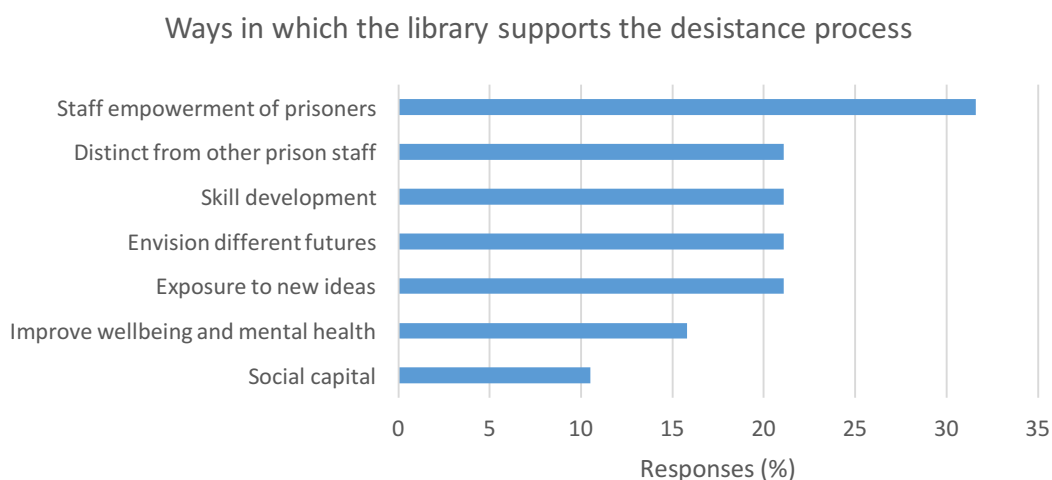
A final question asked staff members if they thought engagement with library services could positively contribute to an individual's journey of desistance from crime. Sixty per cent of respondents answered positively, with the remainder saying that they contributed "somewhat" to desistance. It was acknowledged that this is a very difficult thing to measure, and while it may contribute to desistance, this would be alongside many other things:

*"I agree with this but how would I prove it? I don't know."* (Respondent 4)

*"I think this would be a very difficult thing to measure and would have to be seen alongside a lot of other factors."* (Respondent 15)

*"Generally not on its own, but it provides a supportive environment for those who genuinely want to change, and a safe space in which to do it."*  
(Respondent 7)

Open-ended questions on this issue were again coded and categorised, and the graph below shows the various examples of how the library was thought to contribute to this process of change:



**Figure 17.** Ways in which library services support the desistance process

Staff encouragement and empowerment of prisoners was the most common answer, and it was further noted that staff-prisoner relationships differed in the library as they were not considered to be uniformed staff. Respondent 1 commented, *“we are seen as non-prison workers...they will confide in use and ask for advice or just want someone to listen.”* The distinct nature of staff-prisoner relationships in the library will become an important theme in this research, and is again explored in more detail in each case study. Staff also referred to the way in which reading and socialisation with others can generate new and different opinions and spark new learning interests:

*“The library can allow a person to learn about the world in a way they never got involved with previously. Some prisoners have expressed fascination at the range of subjects and topics that exist! Many are open to reading and learning about new things - whichever way the wind takes them.”* (Respondent 28)

*“The library supports an individual to think, relax, be distracted, empathise with others etc. through reading, exposure to ideas, socialization.”* (Respondent 29)

*“Books, information and informal learning broaden horizons, entertain and expose the potential to make different choices in the future.”* (Respondent 19)

Questionnaire responses showed library staff to be confident about the value of the services they provide and that library engagement could contribute positively to the lives of people in prison. Respondents also acknowledged the difficulty of proving the impact of library engagement to others. These initial findings also helped to identify areas of interest to explore during staff interviews, particularly in relation to the management of library services, the level of liaison with the education department and how to successfully demonstrate the value of their services in order to raise the profile of prison libraries both within and beyond the prison.

### 4.3 Interview findings

The remainder of this chapter presents the findings of ten follow-up interviews conducted with prison library staff members. Although guided by an interview schedule (Appendix B), the interviews were semi-structured and allowed for new issues or topics to be raised and discussed. The interviews were designed to build on questionnaire findings and generate a deeper understanding of staff experiences of providing library services to people in prison. As this approach sought to identify patterns across staff members' experiences and perspectives, it was determined that this dataset would be analysed thematically. This process of analysis is described in section 3.4.3. Finalised codes were organised into categories and sub-categories, which are shown in the table below.

**Table 8.** List of core categories and sub-categories (Phase One interviews)

<b>Core Category</b>	<b>Subcategories</b>
Dual management	Accountability Value attributed to library Professional isolation
Library as <i>distinct</i>	Space Prisoner-staff relationships Trust and reliability Sense of autonomy Sole venture
Communication and liaison	Integration with prison regime Relationship with education department Liaison with public libraries External partnerships
Impact of social context	Operational issues Security Perceptions of prison staff Support of Governor
Prisoner engagement	Passing time and alleviating boredom Socialisation experience Self-development and wellbeing

	Increased confidence Lack of interest
--	--

These categories and sub-categories are the focus of the following paragraphs. They help to formulate a clear picture of contemporary prison library services and provide a strong basis from which to undertake a more thorough exploration of library services during the case study phase of this research project. References are also made to questionnaire findings where appropriate to enable triangulation and validation.

Demographics of the ten participants and their workplaces are detailed in Table 9. Staff members will be referred to by letter throughout this discussion e.g. Participant A, Participant B. This is a small sample of prison library staff working across different jurisdictions in the UK and simply provides an overview of library provision in a range of both privately funded and public sector prisons. The sample represents prisons based only in England, Wales and Scotland. Three interview participants are based in private prisons, and their libraries are managed directly by the prison rather than in conjunction with the local PLA, which will be taken into account when discussing findings.

**Table 9.** Demographics of interview participants and their workplace

Participant	Job Title	Region	Prison Category	Type of Prison	Male or Female prison	Responsibility for management
Participant A	Prison Librarian	Eng/Wales	D	PSP	Male	Local PLA
Participant B	Library Services Co-ordinator	Scotland	Mixed categories	Private	Male	Prison
Participant C	Library Manager	Eng/Wales	C	PSP	Male	Industrial society
Participant D	Library manager	Eng/Wales	B	Private	Male	Prison
Participant E	Prison Librarian	Eng/Wales	B	PSP	Male	Local PLA

Participant F	Prison Librarian	Eng/Wales	C	PSP	Male	Local PLA
Participant G	Library manager	Eng/Wales	B/C	PSP	Male	Local PLA
Participant H	Network librarian	Scotland	Mixed categories	PSP	Male and Female	Local PLA
Participant I	Prison Librarian	Eng/Wales	B	Private	Male	Prison
Participant J	Library Supervisor	Eng/Wales	C	PSP	Male	Local PLA

#### 4.3.1 Dual management

*(Subcategories: accountability; value attributed to library; professional isolation)*

Questionnaire data revealed that most libraries in public sector prisons come under the management of their local PLA. When explored further during staff interviews, it became clear that a kind of dual management exists in these establishments and that this has significant implications for the delivery of library services. The PLA may be responsible for the staffing and provision of resources, but the library is run under a Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the prison and the local PLA, which *“sets out each side of the contract and what our responsibilities are”* (Participant E). Most participants noted having to report to a line manager in both the prison and the PLA. Staff recognised both the benefits and drawbacks of this kind of organisational structure. The most frequently discussed implication of having *“two masters”* (Participant J) was a lack of accountability to either line manager. Neither the prison nor the PLA took full responsibility for the library, which led to a lack of vested interest in the service.

*“It has its pros and cons. We have an inside manager and an outside manager. Neither side knows much about the other side. We’re like piggy in the middle, but we know more than anything.”* (Participant J)



*“My direct line manager, who is the person who is my interface with the Director, I despair of him. He’s a nice enough guy, but he’s a prison guy you know, he’s prison. Before he was our manager, he did some other role which was security-based, and he’s much more of a prison person, his background is prison, he’s not really focused on what we do. Trying to get to see him is really difficult.” (Participant D)*

A seemingly positive implication of this dual management was that staff had more autonomy and the freedom to make decisions about which programmes, activities or events to facilitate in the library. It enabled staff to be creative with little pushback from senior management and removed pressure to reach any specific targets. This lack of targets or Key Performance Indicators was also noted by multiple participants, and the prevailing opinion was that this had negative implications for the service. It resulted in library achievements being overlooked and added to a general lack of awareness about what the library offers.

*“We’re not a focus because, well, an organisation in general is measured on various performance indicators...and if we don’t have that many – we don’t really have any as such – they’re not going to look at us much.” (Participant F).*

*“...because we have no targets, there is no real pressure to perform...The library is the first thing to be knocked on the head when the prison is short-staffed.” (Participant J).*

Not only does it result in the library being overlooked within the prison, it also leads to the library being overlooked in wider policy discussions and reform strategies. When the Coates Report, *Unlocking potential: a review of education in prison*, was published by the UK Government in 2016, there was no mention of the role of the library in supporting the learning experiences of prisoners. This was a point of contention for one staff member:

*"I mean the Coates Report didn't really mention it. I searched for it and no mention of library and I just thought, really?" (Participant F).*

This disbelief was also voiced by a questionnaire respondent when asked if they had any other comments to make about the role of the library:

*"I was disappointed by the fact that libraries were barely (if at all?) mentioned in the Coates Review. Outcomes are less measurable than say, education, and this gives us more freedom but less clout." (Respondent 7).*

A similar sense of frustration at being overlooked was apparent throughout the interviews. Although rarely required to do so, library staff still collected borrowing statistics and user feedback in an attempt to demonstrate the value of their services.

*"...there's no point in doing it and not publicising it so that's why we do our quarterly report, it gives evidence of everything we do." (Participant H)*

Participant B offered an example of how collecting statistics proved beneficial for their service. When the prison decided to cut the library from the induction process, library staff were able to show that borrowing figures were down as a result of this action, and the prison reversed its decision. It should be noted that this staff member worked in a private prison. Only one of the three staff members interviewed from private prisons reported having to produce any regular statistics or feedback for line managers.

Library staff also spoke of the neglect and isolation they felt due to a lack of interest from their line managers. This sense of isolation was sometimes confounded by the lack of integration with other departments in the prison, and the fact that they either worked alone in the library or had a very small team of staff. Staff reflected on their efforts to liaise with local public libraries, but these efforts were somewhat unsuccessful. Participant C saw the physical location of the prison as being the cause of separation between her and the local public libraries, describing her library service as

*“a little bit out of sight, out of mind.”* Another spoke of her frustration that the public library service did not support or reach out more to the prison:

*“It would be good once your research is done, if you could identify this gap and encourage local public libraries to take the initiative to contact the local prison to see what they could offer and do to liaise with each other rather than it having to be the prison librarian contacting them.”* (Participant A).

There are clearly concerns to be raised about the organisational structure and management of prison library provision, and the wide-ranging implications of falling under the governance of two separate organisations. The relationship between prison and public libraries has no doubt been further affected by the widespread closure of public libraries in the UK over the past decade. A report from the Culture, Media and Sport Committee in 2012 addressed these closures and stressed the importance of libraries' support for literacy, noting specifically the low literacy levels of people in prison. The report warned that these closures would “damage people's life chances and contribute to social problems” (House of Commons, 2012, p.98). A poignant example of the repercussions of the reduced funding for public libraries can be seen in the Irish Prison Service, where it led to the removal of prison library staff and significantly reduced access to the library space (see Section 1.3.1.2).

Although library staff welcomed the freedom often brought by working under a dual management, they seemed more perplexed by the fact that the library tends to get overlooked and therefore undervalued as a service. It was also recognised that library outcomes are difficult to measure, and so there is a resulting tension between not wanting to produce potentially meaningless statistics to senior management and there being no record of the positive impact of library services. The framework presented in Chapter Two was drawn up as a possible way of demonstrating library outcomes in a meaningful way and helped to inform the research approach to the case studies carried out in the second phase of research. Chapter Seven discusses the usefulness of this framework and if it can be used in future research to help staff demonstrate the value of the services they offer.

#### 4.3.2 Library as 'distinct'

*(Subcategories: space, prisoner-staff relationships, trust and reliability, sense of autonomy)*

The library as being a distinct and unique entity within the prison was established as a core category during latter rounds of re-coding. It was expected that library staff would identify the library as a *normal* space within the prison, as this is something which is repeatedly highlighted in prison library literature. Participants did speak of the library as being *"a nice, safe, neutral space for them to come"* (Participant J) where the *"walls provide peace and safety"* (Participant I) in a less than peaceful environment. There is a conscious effort to establish and maintain this distinct space. Participant J continues, *"we really don't like fighting in here. Keep the madness to the wings."* Further analysis of interview transcripts revealed other aspects of the library which set it apart as a distinct service, not only within the prison environment but also within the wider library profession.

In her research on the moral quality of prison life, Liebling (2011) focused on interpersonal relationships and treatment within prison, noting the impact that differing *"levels of respect, fairness and humanity"* can have on the prisoner experience (p.533). Although Liebling's research focused on treatment from wider prison staff, it seems significant that the library is a space within this environment where positive interpersonal relationships based on mutual respect and opportunities for autonomy appear to be the norm. Insights into existing prisoner-staff relationships and interactions in the library were provided not only through explicit answers from staff on this topic, but also in the humane way that staff generally spoke of their library users during the interviews. Aside from two staff members working in private prisons in England, all participants self-identified as civilian staff working within the prison and being separate from other prison staff. They believed this helped to gain trust and respect from the prisoners:

*"We're not in uniform obviously, we're dressed normally, and from the word go we address men by their first name, not by their surname, and they call us miss,*

*and we say “Don’t! Call me [first name].” We try to take all of that official nonsense - we understand perfectly why it exists and why it has to be there - but we try to make this somewhere where it doesn’t have to exist, but there’s still respect and all that and security obviously.” (Participant H)*

*“...we’re not in uniform, so we don’t kind of treat them as prisoners as such, we treat them as our readers. I think that’s most appreciated thing about it.”*  
(Participant D)

These answers also reflect the importance of labelling, which is an important discussion within desistance research. For an individual to sustain desistance, it is important that they are able to successfully shed the negative label of “offender” and develop a new, pro-social identity (Maruna and LeBel, 2010, p.78). Incarceration is guilty of cementing this criminal identity, rather than helping to shed it. When an individual enters the library, he or she is given the opportunity to detach themselves – albeit temporarily – from their prisoner identity. The potential impact of staff attitudes and the interactions between staff and library users should not be underestimated. The research carried out by Liebling (2011, p.534) concluded that the well-being of prisoners “was to a large extent a consequence of their perceived treatment.”

It also became evident that the library was viewed as a trustworthy and reliable service, both by prisoners and by prison staff. One of the most recurring attitudes expressed by library staff was their determination to respond positively to prisoner requests and to follow through with things they had promised. This stands in contrast to the many other aspects of prison life in which prisoners are kept waiting or ignored completely. It also shows understanding from library staff of how challenging this must be for people in prison.

*“They know I never say no, I’ll do my best – if I can’t get something, I’ll explain it to them why I can’t.” (Participant G)*

*“If anyone every asks us to go anywhere, we always try. We want to be able to do that on the same day. They’re kept waiting for everything in prison. People will say they’ll do things for them and then never do. We don’t want to be like that – we know that must be such a frustrating aspect for the guys.”*

(Participant J)

Wider research within the field of librarianship has discussed the trusted nature of libraries, as well as pointing to the ways that a library can encourage trust of others (see Johnson, 2012). Vårheim’s research on libraries and social capital found that libraries have potential for accommodating diversity in patrons, promoting trusting relationships between diverse people and, as a result of this process, create trust toward people in general (2009, p.373). It is important to consider the implication of this kind of space within the prison context, particularly when contemporary prison research places so much emphasis on the need for trust between prisoners and staff in order for a prison to run well.

A sense of autonomy and the freedom of prisoners to pursue individual interests was re-iterated during the interviews, and it has already been discussed how this sets it apart from the controlled nature of the prison regime. It was even noted that, despite the determination of most prison library staff to mirror a community library, the context in which their libraries operate inherently results in them being a *“sole venture”* (Participant G), distinct even from a public library. The following discussion on communication and liaison underlines the implications of embarking on this sole venture, and the need for collaboration with others in order for the venture to be successful.

#### 4.3.3 Communication and liaison

*(Subcategories: integration with prison regime, relationship with education department, liaison with public libraries, external partnerships)*

Another core category was that of communication and liaison with other people, organisations and departments, both within and outside the prison. Some of these

subcategories have already been touched upon, such as liaison with public libraries, but it is necessary to examine the concepts of communication and liaison as a whole, in order to better understand how library services are provided and the role of the library within the wider prison context. It raises questions about the benefits of integration with other prison departments, and what integration might mean for an entity which considers its aims and principles to be distinct from those of a prison (Stevens and Usherwood, 1995).

When discussing communication with other departments in the prison, the most commonly discussed topic was the library's relationship with the education department. Comments reflected what had already been indicated in questionnaire findings, where the level of collaboration ranged from almost non-existent to being fully integrated within the education department. Physical separation within the prison and timetabling issues were again noted as barriers to potential integration.

*"It's also another thing to do with time...maybe the education department would like to come here and do projects but unfortunately that's not possible because I have too many people waiting to use the library." (Participant E)*

The library which worked most closely with the education department was also the library which seemed to be most valued and supported in the prison. This staff member spoke positively throughout her interview of how the library was supported by the Governor and was in fact deemed to be the "hub" of the education department:

*"Our last manager allowed us to totally integrate, and one of the teachers said you know basically we've changed the department completely, the library's become the hub of the education department, which we feel very strongly about...We work with them basically all of the time, we interact with them all of the time." (Participant H)*

The level of collaboration with other departments in the prison also varied. Some library staff noted working closely with the art department on various projects and competitions, as well as working alongside employability advisors in the prison when prisoners were due to be released. While it was common for libraries to order educational books and resources for teachers, some library staff also noted that they supplied books to other departments or workshops within the prison. Prison officers and other staff members are often encouraged to borrow from the library:

*“All members of staff can join the library as well. Some of them have become good borrowers. It’s for everyone here.”* (Participant C)

*“Some of the staff use the library – we’re open to them. Not the governing governor, but another governor is always using it and using inter-library loans, which is good because the men see him in here as well so that’s good.”*  
(Participant D)

One staff member reflected on the lack of integration within her institution:

*“This prison is very silo working, there is no joined-up-ness. The communication between departments is very poor, and it seems to have always been like this, no matter who the Governor is. Education is about bums on seats, because they’re so affected by policies inflicted from on high.”* (Participant J)

There are clear benefits to the library being more integrated within the prison, both in terms of providing a more holistic service to prisoners and to raise awareness amongst other departments about what the library offers. There is also a risk involved, for the library does not want to become so aligned with other departments that they too are negatively affected by these *“policies inflicted from high.”* Collaboration and integration is something which will be explored in more depth during case study research, for it is already becoming apparent that it may have significant implications for both the experiences of library staff and the quality of learning opportunities available to prisoners.



All participants - both those working in private and public sector prisons - noted working to some extent with external volunteers and organisations either for provision of resources or contribution to literacy programmes and events run within the library. The wide range of library services listed in the previous sections would not be possible without such input.

*“We try to have some kind of monthly event...This month’s was actually a wellbeing drop-in, where we got outside people in, professionals, to weigh them and talk to them about diet etc. We’ve had author talks, we’ve had poetry workshops, things along that line...and we’re soon going to start a creative writing workshop.”* (Participant D).

This is another aspect of the library which offers prisoners a glimpse of the outside world. It was noted that engagement with these volunteers was almost always positive, perhaps because they are not staff who have been hired by the prison to help correct or rehabilitate them (Harris, 2005, p.215).

A final example of communication to mention is that between prison library professionals working in different institutions. It has been established that the prison library can be an isolating place to work, and this isolation is deepened by the lack of communication between other professionals working in similar job roles. Some staff members referred to the JISCMail list as a way to email other prison library staff when they had a query about something, and the annual CILIP Libraries Training Day was also valued as a way for staff to meet up and discuss their profession. Despite these methods of communication, library staff still expressed a desire to interact more with other professionals and to share their workplace experiences.

*“I think the research is really useful for us as well because you do get to find out what other prisons are doing.”* (Participant F)

*“What would be interesting would be to have the opportunity to talk to other library staff more about what they do, pick their brains and get some ideas.” (Participant C)*

Discussion about communication and liaison has shown that it is not possible for a prison library to operate successfully without the input of others. Staff rely particularly on the support of external literacy organisations and volunteers when running various literacy programmes and activities. Those who considered their library to work closely alongside other departments in the prison appeared more positive about the quality of services they provided. Collaboration with the education department and integration within the wider prison regime were noted as important factors to consider in the subsequent case studies.

#### 4.3.4 Impact of social context

*(Subcategories: operational issues, security, perception of prison staff, support of Governor)*

One of the main reasons for choosing to conduct case study research was to examine the provision of library services and prisoners’ engagement with these services within the wider social context of the prison. While this is explored further in subsequent chapters, the issues raised during library staff interviews help to paint an initial picture of the challenges and constraints of working within this context. The inherent dichotomy between the library profession and the prison service was identified in section 2.2, and the subcategories above show the range of factors which were noted to impact – almost always negatively – upon the provision of library services.

Operational issues in the prison were the most obvious barrier to library access. Security is of the utmost concern in prisons, and this inevitably has implications for the resources available to prisoners. It impacts particularly upon access to technology and online resources. While these things are a core aspect of any public library service, they are very much restricted within prison libraries. Staff were realistic about this

limitation, recognising that it was a very difficult challenge to overcome. They had low hopes for better provision in the near future:

*“Online is just impossible - I think that would take a long time for any prison in the UK for prisoners to access online information. It might happen in the future but it’s a long time off.”* (Participant A)

Timetabling issues were also identified as a potential barrier to library access. It is common for library access to be timetabled into a prisoners’ daily schedule, but this can lead to limited time spent in the library or potential clashes with other activities.

*“It’s all timetabled and our timetable is quite tight realistically because we are trying to see a lot of prisoners...unfortunately it doesn’t leave us for a lot of time.”* (Participant E)

*“...then the whole timetable is filled and they won’t be able to. They won’t have time to come up.”* (Participant A).

Although Participant H was generally positive about the amount of library access in their establishment, they did refer to the *“bugbear”* of library visits sometimes clashing with other scheduled workshops. Staff are still able to bring books and other resources to these individuals, but she notes that *“nothing replaces a visit to the library.”*

Interviewees also raised the issue of staffing levels within the prison, and the implications this has for the library. This was not so much an issue for open prisons where a freeflow system exists, but in all other categories of prison individuals are generally escorted by prison officers to the library. When officers are short-staffed or an unexpected incident occurs elsewhere in the prison, this can lead to library visits being cut short or simply not happening at all. Participant C noted how this can interrupt library sessions and reading groups, *“Staffing is a problem...if the officers have to go, the men have to go back as well.”*

Prison staff perceptions of the library can also have an indirect impact upon the provision of library services. When the purpose and the value of the library is misunderstood or under-estimated, it becomes a low priority within the prison:

*“Access is always a challenge in any establishment, because obviously they have their priorities and we have to fit in with that.” (Participant F)*

*“I think people have different priorities. I mean, we’re only a small part of the prison. If you look on the wings, you see people being stabbed and all sorts, then you’re talking about books and you can understand why some people say, ‘that’s low priority’ but it’s all significant. I think, if you’re stuck in a cell for a long period of time, a book can mentally help you.” (Participant I)*

Frustration was voiced about the lack of understanding not only of prison officers, but also of senior management in relation to the library:

*“...they think a library could just as well be a trolley of books...A library is not a trolley of books. I don’t care how often you’ve watched the Shawshank Redemption. So that one is a limit that I’ve had a few arguments – discussions – about.” (Participant B)*

Other staff members did speak positively of the support shown by senior management. Strong support from senior staff members was in fact considered one of the main factors of library success within the prison. The participants who spoke most positively about their services were those whose Governor or Director took a sincere interest in the library, and recognised its potential to positively impact upon the lives of prisoners.

*“...the main Governor is hugely interested in the library and has dramatically improved access. The Governor has actually said to me, he said ‘you can judge the success of a prison by its library. If the library’s running well, the prison’s running well.’ ...we are very lucky, it certainly has made a huge difference to*

*us. Basically he's moving forward with us, he's doing everything he can, he hasn't just set it in motion, he's monitoring it weekly basically to make sure that things happen as he wants them to happen, which is fabulous for us."*

(Participant H)

*"A great director makes a massive difference...not even just in being recompensed for what you do, but it was the support, the exposure."* (Participant I)

As with any service, a greater understanding of what the library offers and of its positive contribution to prisoners' lives would garner stronger support both from senior management and other members of staff in the prison. It raises once more the issue of how prison libraries can demonstrate their value or outcomes, without having to provide potentially meaningless quantitative data to the prison which would not accurately reflect experiences of prisoners' engagement with the service.

#### 4.3.5 Prisoner engagement

*(Subcategories: passing time and alleviating boredom, socialisation experience, self-development and wellbeing, increased confidence, lack of interest)*

Prisoner engagement became another core category, as staff members spoke of prisoners' attitudes toward the library, the ways in which they engaged (or did not engage) with various aspects of the service, and how this engagement appeared to contribute to the wellbeing and self-development of library users.

One of the most common views was that the resources and activities provided by the library were used to pass time and alleviate boredom. Along with reading for pleasure, the popularity of DVDs was emphasised, as was the enjoyment of literacy-related events facilitated by the library. These included author visits, poetry and creative writing workshops, reading challenges and competitions and even literacy festivals with local poets and authors in attendance. The popularity of these kind of events was evidenced by the fact that they were so often over-subscribed:

*"...pretty much everything that runs through the library is oversubscribed or there's a waiting list." (Participant I)*

*"There's a waiting list to join." (Participant E)*

*"It's quite often fully booked." (Participant C)*

The success of these activities and events was attributed to the fact that it was something different for them and broke up the monotony of the prison regime.

*"It's something a bit different for them." (Participant C)*

*"It's just something different for them. They see us every day, I'm sure it gets boring, then you get somebody different coming in to talk about the book...so the guys really enjoyed that." (Participant A)*

Library staff spoke of the increased confidence of those who engaged with informal learning activities and book discussion groups, and their hopes that this confidence might encourage them to use libraries on the outside.

*"I think people will join a reading group once they've been brave enough to sit and speak out about something. One of them said it gave them confidence to do that, whereas before he wouldn't have dreamt about saying what he thought about the book." (Participant D)*

*"I like to think if they've had a good experience of the library inside, they'll feel safe to use it outside. I think it probably increases their confidence being in here, and they might be more confident to use service when they get out." (Participant J)*

A staff member recounted an experience of one individual who took part in a series of reading workshops run by a visiting author. This individual had quite low levels of literacy and the end of the five sessions it was noted:

*“He actually produced some written work and he read it to the group on the last session, and we had someone in the group say, ‘My God, you could barely read a few weeks ago and now you’ve written stuff.’ So that was really encouraging.”* (Participant C)

As well as the recreational value of the library, and its opportunities for education and self-development, the library was also described repeatedly as being a “lifeline” for some prisoners. Staff provided anecdotal evidence of how libraries contributed to the wellbeing of individuals. They also noted that this is rarely recognised by staff outside the library, who misunderstand the value of what this space can offer.

*“Like when they leave and they say, “you do know, you know, this library saved my life?” and I think, we’d never had heard anything like that on the outside.”* (Participant D)

*“Really you can see first-hand how much it helps these guys get through their day. There’s a lot of devastation and loneliness and isolation and I think you are key in helping with that, just by offering a service.”* (Participant I)

One staff member shared a poignant example of a library orderly who was *“having really dark thoughts when he started working,”* but later shared with library staff that his job in the library *“turned his life around and prevented anything from happening”* (Participant, Prison H).

For all the examples of positive engagement with library services, it was also recognised by staff that the library is not for everyone. The previous section underlined the importance of freedom of choice, and this includes the choice not to

visit the library or make use of its services. When asked why individuals may choose not to engage with the library, answers ranged from:

- Prior negative experiences of learning and resulting negative associations with any kind of learning environment.
- A lack of awareness of what the library offers.
- Not confident enough to use the library due to low levels of literacy.
- Clashes with other activities in their timetable.

Although staff seemed keen to promote their services to everyone and to fight misconceptions of what the library does, they also accepted the fact that not all prisoners would be interested in what the library has to offer.

*“But there are some who’ll not engage because it’s just not their cup of tea basically. We don’t worry about those, all we can do is worry about the people we can get reading, and make sure they can get constant access to the library.”*

(Participant, Prison H)

#### 4.3.6 Future hopes for prison library profession

Although not established as a core category, it seemed relevant to include some of the hopes expressed by library staff for the future of their profession and development of their individual workplace. These aspirations reveal current frustrations amongst staff, underline once more the constraints of the prison regime and affirm a sense of isolation and neglect. They also reflect a genuine desire to support and empower prisoners and a belief in the value of their service. Some of these hopes are listed below:

- Increased liaison with local public libraries, particularly when it comes to supporting prisoners during resettlement. Participant J noted that the changing



nature of public libraries - particularly in England where there have been severe budget cuts and library closures in recent years – makes it even more challenging to foster good relationships with local public libraries.

- More consistency across services in the prison library profession. Although only representative of a small sample of prison libraries, the data in this chapter makes clear that the level and quality of library services differ in each prison site. Staff wanted to see more consistency across the services they offer:

*“It would be nice if there was greater consistency across the board in levels of what we offer. Especially because we transfer people all the time – the guys will move on from here and go somewhere else and it will be different. In an ideal world, it would be seamless.”* (Participant J)

*“I think there needs to be a better structure that applies to the whole framework. Every prison needs to follow the same sort of structure, and until that I think it’s just always going to be the case of, people say ‘oh well that prison’s got it better because they’ve got this and that.’ Every prison needs to have the same opportunities. I hope one day it becomes that. I just hope libraries aren’t eradicated!”* (Participant I)

- Further integration with other prison departments and inclusion in relevant planning meetings.
- Most staff hoped simply for the provision of better resources and a more appropriate library space to support a population with such widely varied literacy, recreational and language needs. They were realistic about the difficulty of providing access to online information, but hopeful that some sort of limited but useful access would be possible in the future.
- The overriding concern expressed by staff members was the fact that the library is so often overlooked, both within the prison and among the wider

public library service and there is a resulting lack of inclusion in relevant policy documents and strategic planning. They were therefore eager to find ways to show their value and merit inclusion in future development plans for the support of people in prison.

*“But nobody ever asks me how do prisoners use the library? Nobody has asked me that question before. I would say they value me as a library member of staff, because I’m the only one, but whether they value me and the service that I provide and how I provide it, that’s another question.”*

(Participant A)

*“I want to see the profile of prison libraries raised everywhere!”*

(Participant J)

*“The libraries being seen and being treated as an integral part of the whole process, from the guy’s induction, during sentence time, pre-release, release and resettlement – I think the library should be seen as a very important part of that. That’s what I would like to see.”* (Participant A)

#### 4.4 Conclusion

The data collected during this phase of research was rich in detail and could have been analysed further to present an even more thorough account of the experiences and attitudes of those working in the prison library profession. This was not, however, the main focus of this research project. The findings presented here were intended to provide a contemporary and context-specific (UK and Ireland) insight into the provision of prison library services, which would help to design and conduct a well-informed piece of case study research. Findings highlighted a number of important issues to be explored further in case study research. Case studies will also present an opportunity to hear from prisoners and see if their experiences align with the staff perceptions of library services noted in this chapter. This phase of research confirmed the choice of a

case study as a relevant approach to examine this phenomenon, as many aspects of library services are affected by the wider prison regime. It would be impossible to have a full understanding of these factors or to truly understand the role played by the library without taking into account the wider environment in which library services are offered. The following two chapters will present the findings from these case studies, before a full discussion of the significance of all findings in Chapter Seven.

## Chapter Five: Hydebank Wood College and Women's Prison

### 5.1 Introduction

Following a broader exploration of prison library provision across sites in the UK and Ireland, this chapter presents findings from the first of two case studies which examine more closely the role of the library within a secure setting. A case study can be defined as:

“an in-depth investigation of a discrete entity (which may be a single setting, subject, collection or event) on the assumption that it is possible to derive knowledge of the wider phenomenon from the intensive investigation of a specific instance or case” (Becker, 1970, p.75).

The two separate case studies carried out in this research aim to shed light on the wider phenomenon of prison library provision and user engagement.

As Yin (2014, p.16) observes, case study research is appropriate where it is impossible to separate the phenomenon's variables from its context. In this case, it is not possible to derive a full picture of user engagement with the library without considering other aspects of the prison regime and the general experience of incarceration. Data was collected over a period of three weeks between September to October 2018, which allowed time to observe and better understand the context in which library services were offered. Chapter One offered an overview of the NIPS and detailed some of the recent changes made to education provision across the prison estate and at Hydebank. The following paragraphs re-introduce this case study setting, adding further details which were uncovered during the fieldwork process. Implications of housing women prisoners at a site designed primarily for young men is then discussed. The chapter details the approach taken to this case study, the sample of participants included and how data was analysed. The remainder of the chapter offers a thematic exploration of the main findings from the case study. Throughout the chapter, empirical findings are woven with discussion of prison sociology literature and aspects of the theoretical

model outlined in Chapter Two in order to deepen understanding of the attitudes and experiences noted by research participants.

## 5.2 Research setting

Hydebank Wood College and Women's Prison (subsequently referred to as Hydebank) is a unique secure setting in the outskirts of Belfast in Northern Ireland. It detains young men between the ages of 18-21, and in some cases up to the age of 24. It is also the site for Northern Ireland's only women's prison. Between September to December 2018 (the quarter in which case study research was carried out) the average daily population of young men at Hydebank was 90 (6.3% of Northern Ireland's overall prison population). The average daily population of women prisoners was 64 (4.5% of the overall prison population) (DOJNI, 2019).

There are no recent figures on the literacy levels of young men at Hydebank, but a report from 2014 notes that 34% of young men admitted to Hydebank had literacy skills of Entry Level 3 (that of a 9 year old) or below and 51% had a numerical ability of Entry Level 3 or below (CJINI, 2014). On a wider prison scale, over 60% of the prison population in Northern Ireland are below the minimum required level in their essential skills of literacy and numeracy (CJINI, 2012). Recognising the complex literacy needs of young men imprisoned at Hydebank, the 2011 Review of the NIPS recommended that Hydebank transition from a Young Offenders Centre (YOC) into a Secure College (PRT, 2011b). It is the UK's first and only Secure College, placing education at the core of its ethos and regime.

One of the main changes brought about by this transition was the outsourcing of education provision to a local Further Education College (Belfast Metropolitan College), although some teaching and library staff remained employed by the prison (Flanagan and Butler, 2017). Officially opened in 2015, the renewed focus of this Secure College was to provide individuals "with enhanced opportunities to improve their educational and vocational skills" (CJINI, 2016c, p.5). An inspection of Hydebank

carried out a year later noted that this change in function “had resulted in a major shift in the ethos of the institution” (ibid., p.5) and that outcomes had “improved significantly” (p.6) since the previous inspection in 2013. The annual report produced by the Independent Monitoring Board in 2018 noted however that “the curriculum provided does not necessarily match the needs and interests of young men and females” (p.33) and advised that clear learning plans needed to be developed for all students. Some of the educational and vocational opportunities at Hydebank include “Literacy, Numeracy, Art, Hairdressing, Catering, IT, Joinery, Painting, Gardening and Ceramics” (IMB, 2017, p.30).

Fieldwork for this study took place almost three years after the re-purposing of Hydebank, and the findings presented in this chapter make clear that it is still in somewhat of a transition period. Flanagan and Butler (2017) investigated the impact of these changes and noted some of the challenges experienced, particularly during the early years of transition. As this Secure College was the first of its kind, they found that staff “lacked clarity about the overall strategic vision” and struggled to adapt to the changes being made (pp.4-5). As well as budget and resource issues, there was also tension between existing prison staff and newly employed Belfast Metropolitan College staff, leading to “unease, uncertainty and confusion” in the college (p.1). An appreciation of these challenges is crucial to understanding the way in which library services are now delivered and the resulting frustrations expressed by both staff and prisoners in this case study. Although some of the tensions noted by Flanagan and Butler - particularly those between new and existing staff members - had been mitigated by the time of this research, findings of this case study highlight some of the remaining challenges caused by the transition.

### 5.3 Imprisonment of women

Hydebank is unique not only for being a Secure College, but also because of the mixed population it houses. Women of all ages are held in a complex called Ash House adjacent to the men’s accommodation. This complex was opened in 2004 when all

female prisoners were transferred from Northern Ireland's high security men's prison, HMP Maghaberry. The imprisonment of women at these sites has long been criticised by scholars and inspectors, with the Owers review of the NIPS citing Ash House as being a "wholly unsuitable" environment for these women (PRT, 2011b, p.69). Its recommendation to build a new custodial facility for women "staffed and run around a therapeutic model" (p.69) is the only recommendation from this report which has not yet been realised.

Little is known about the educational experiences of those imprisoned in Northern Ireland and studies which do exist primarily focus on the male prison population (for example, Irwin 2003, 2008; Flanagan and Butler, 2017). This is reflective of wider prison policy and research, where women are often overlooked as they constitute only a small percentage of the overall prison population and are thus held in institutions designed primarily for the needs and risks of men (Carlen and Worrall, 2004; Home Office, 2017; Prison Reform Trust, 2017). This is also true of Northern Ireland, where women account for only 4.5% of the prison population (DOJNI, 2019). Moore and Scraton (2014, p.ix) describe women prisoners in Northern Ireland as being caught in a "double-bind of marginalisation." Firstly, as is the case with women imprisonment in general, they are held in a "penal estate that exudes masculinity in its patriarchal, deeply gendered custom and practice" (p.ix). They are further classed as "ordinary" prisoners in a "context of resistance and reform that has prioritized the rights and interests of politically affiliated prisoners" (p.ix). With the transformation of Hydebank into a Secure College, women now also must fit into a regime designed specifically for young men whose educational needs have been prioritised. An inspection of Ash House carried out in 2016 did note an improvement in the provision of learning and skills for women but noted that they were still limited and that "the location of women within a male establishment placed limits on what they could access and achieve" (CJINI, 2016a, p.6).

The lived experiences of women prisoners held within a secure setting for young men is a study in itself. For the context of this research, it is enough to understand how this impacts upon women's experiences of library access and engagement. While a strict

timetable (Figure 18) ensures that the two populations do not mix, women prisoners do make use of the same education and library services as the young men. Their sessions are shorter than those of the young men, and some are unable to access the library space at all due to work commitments in other areas of the prison. The limited sample of female participants in this study does not allow for an in-depth examination of their specific information and education needs and how the library succeeds in meeting these. It does however allow their voices to be heard and offer insights into their experiences of using the services. It is recommended that future research in this area focuses solely on women's engagement with library services to better understand their distinct needs and experiences.

#### 5.4 Overview of the library



[In November 2019, a new Learning and Skills Centre, including a library, opened at Hydebank. Redevelopment of this area began shortly after this fieldwork ended. The findings presented in this chapter are based on the library which existed before this redesign.]

The library at Hydebank is centrally located within the Learning and Skills Department, midway between a large workshop area and a number of education classrooms. Prisoners are escorted to library sessions in the same way they are escorted to other classes and workshops, but it is not required that an officer is present in the library at all times. Officers remain stationed outside in the corridor, and only enter the library when it is time for a smoking break, to escort prisoners elsewhere or if alerted to a security incident by library staff. The library space is reminiscent of a small public library, with well-organised bookshelves, two computers at the side of the room, a staff desk and two tables in the centre of the room with magazines and newspapers spread across them. Prisoner art is displayed on the walls, with a particularly impressive mural of the Girl with the Dragon Tattoo painted on the wall behind the staff desk. Since the transition into a Secure College, library visits have been timetabled in much the same way as education classes, with both male and female



prisoners being timetabled either into a morning slot (from 8.45am to 12pm) or afternoon slot (from 2pm to 4pm). Figure 18 reflects the weekly timetable at the time of fieldwork and offers an overview of some of the services offered by the library.

	Monday (classes)	Tuesday	Wednesday (classes)	Thursday	Friday (Classes)
<b>Session 1</b>	Book Folding	C2 Library	Shannon Trust Reading	Library  Trolley for CSU  Separated Unit and Female Gardens	Book Folding
<b>Break</b>	Break/Open Library	Library Trolley  for Horticulture,  Cabin and Kitchen	Break/Open Library		Break/Open Library
<b>Session 2</b>	Learn Sign Language		Reading Aloud		Learn Sign Language
<b>Break</b>	Break/Open Library		Break/Open Library		Break/Open Library
<b>Session 3</b>	Poetry Class	Reading Aloud	Poetry Class		
<b>Lunch</b>					
<b>Session 4</b>	Book Folding	Male Gardens	Foreign National Females	New Committals (Male)	Quiet Reading
<b>Break</b>	Break/Open Library				New Committals (Female)
<b>Session 5</b>	Learn Sign Language				

 *Male visits*
 *Female visits*

**Figure 18:** Timetable of library sessions at Hydebank

Findings presented later in the chapter detail some of the frustrations that come with the library being treated as a classroom and with prisoners having to spend almost three hours at a time in the library space, rather than having a choice of when and for how long to access the library. As can be seen in the timetable above, there are also dedicated timeslots on Tuesdays and Thursdays for library staff to visit and offer services to prisoners who are otherwise unable to access the library. During an early visit to Hydebank, the researcher observed library staff bringing books to young men who were working in the gardens and unable to access the library. Later in the afternoon, the librarian met with a group of women working in the kitchens who were

taking a short break from work. They sat together outside the kitchen and participated in a bookfolding activity. Due to the work schedule of these women, they were unable to attend the scheduled visits on the timetable.

Aside from a small-scale research project carried out as part of a Masters dissertation on prison-based family literacy programmes (Finlay, 2014), there is no existing research on library service provision at Hydebank. Previous inspection reports offer some description of library services across the prison estate in Northern Ireland, and accounts of the library at Hydebank have been consistently positive. The latest report noted that the contribution of the library was “very good” and that it “supported the development of the young men’s literacy, personal and social skills well” (CJINI, 2016b, p.48). This account was mirrored in the inspection report for Ash House (CJINI, 2016a). Despite these positive reports, it must be noted that policy documents and inspection reports can only ever provide a fraction of the picture. As Crewe (2015, p. 52) notes, “what *actually* occurs in prisons cannot be derived from official aims and policy rhetoric.” There is a need for concrete empirical analysis which shows how the intended aims play out, and to learn about library engagement from the point of view of the library user. The findings presented in this study go some way in meeting this need for Hydebank.

## 5.5 Research sample and approach

As noted in Chapter Three, data was collected through observation of library visits, participant observation of a reading programme (Reading Aloud), a focus group with women prisoners and individual interviews with both prisoners and staff. An interview was also carried out with a member of public library staff in Libraries NI who helped to support the provision of library resources at Hydebank. Daily reflective field notes were made at the end of each visit. While the sample of interview participants was limited, the combination of research methods strengthened the validity of the data and allowed for some measure of triangulation. Underlining the importance of using a variety of methods in prison-based research, King (2000, p.306) states, “if it is possible

to get corroboration for an interpretation of one set of data from data collected by other means then one's confidence in the validity of data is increased." In this case study, observation of library sessions helped to shape the questions asked in interviews and, at the same time, the issues raised in staff and prisoner interviews could be observed during library sessions.

Due to the limited timescale and nature of the research setting, participation largely depended on who was willing to take part, and whose timetable allowed for participation during these weeks. For this reason, an opportunistic or convenience sampling approach was taken. Library staff helped to identify willing participants and an effort was made to speak both with people who enjoyed visiting the library and those who engaged less with its services. Despite an initial period of observation and engagement with library users to build up some level of trust between the researcher and the researched, some prisoners still showed a strong reluctance to being interviewed. The field notes extract below shows some of the suspicion and distrust which exists in prison:

*Chatting to one of the young men at the end of the session, I asked him if he would be happy to be interviewed for my study. I had already discussed my research with him, but he was hesitant and evidently concerned when I mentioned being interviewed. I had to quickly assure him that it would be very informal and questions would be based around his experiences of the library and education at Hydebank. "Ah, that's ok then miss, I'll talk to you." (Field notes, 28 September 2018)*

Another library user became visibly upset when asked to be interviewed. Although the purpose and informal nature of the interview was explained, he refused and became quite angry when the librarian tried to persuade him to participate. This experience highlighted the discretion and care that must be taken when conducting research with vulnerable participants in a setting "possessed by fear and intimidation" (Vogel, 2009, p.20).

Tables 10 and 11 offer details of both prisoner and staff participants. Had this been a quantitative or mixed methods study, it would have been deemed necessary to collect more precise demographic information of participants, such as their age, ethnicity or previous convictions. Given the qualitative and exploratory nature of the research, it was decided that such information was not crucial to the analysis of data. Prior education experiences of interview participants have however been noted, as this has relevance for their attitudes toward both education and library services at Hydebank. All male participants were between the ages of 18-21, as determined by the nature of their imprisonment. Ages of female participants were more varied. It was initially intended that a focus group would be carried out with young men who had participated in the Reading Aloud programme observed at the beginning of the fieldwork period, but an unexpected security incident in the prison prevented this from taking place. Instead, a spontaneous focus group took place with a group of five women during an afternoon session in the library. No other demographic details were taken aside from their chosen pseudonyms. All prisoner participants were asked to choose a pseudonym for the study, which served as an interesting icebreaker for the interviews. Two education staff members and one library staff member were also interviewed. As only one library staff member works at Hydebank and could easily be identified, staff members will simply be referred to as *Staff Member 1, 2 or 3* throughout. When not referred to directly by name, prisoner participants will simply be referred to as male or female participants. Although Hydebank prefers that individuals are now referred to as “students” rather than “prisoners”, all participants will be referred to as prisoners in this study. This is both for reasons of consistency throughout the thesis and because the individuals held at Hydebank who participated in this study did not refer to themselves as students and recognised that they were imprisoned (see section 5.10.1 for further discussion.)

**Table 10.** Overview of prisoner participants at Hydebank

<b>Individual interviews (Prisoners)</b>		
	<b>Chosen Pseudonym</b>	<b>Level of Education</b>
<b>Male participants</b>	Aaron	Expelled from school and attended Alternative Education Provision (AEP).
	Daniel	Expelled from school in 4 <sup>th</sup> year, just before sitting GCSEs.
	Jack	Expelled from school in 5 <sup>th</sup> year.
	Junior	Completed secondary school – attended a technical college to complete a music course.
	Conor	Left school at 16.
	<b>Female participants</b>	Michelle
Jemma		Left school at 16.
<b>Focus group (Female prisoners)</b>		
<b>Female participants</b>	<b>Chosen Pseudonym</b>	
	Ellie	
	Ruby	
	Lisa	
	Cara	
	Aoife	

**Table 11.** Overview of staff participants at Hydebank

<b>Staff Interviews</b>	
<b>Job role</b>	<b>Participant Name</b>
Two prison teachers and a library staff member	Staff Member
External volunteers facilitating literacy programmes in library	Volunteer, the Reader Volunteer, Shannon Trust
Public library staff member	Libraries NI Staff Member

## 5.6 Analysis and presentation of findings

As digital recording devices were not permitted in Hydebank, notes were taken during interviews and the focus group and then written up more fully during a break in the library or an empty classroom. Extensive reflective field notes were written at the end of each visit. As recommended by Corwin and Clemens (2012), field notes were coded thematically alongside interview and focus group transcripts. Field notes both improve the trustworthiness of data and “permit the reader to vicariously experience the research setting” (Corwin and Clemens, 2012, p.492). Excerpts from field notes will be offered occasionally throughout this chapter, where it serves to offer a fuller insight into the research context and to interpret certain experiences or perceptions noted by participants.

As noted in section 3.5.6, a hybrid approach of both deductive and inductive coding took place during the analysis of this dataset. The finalised codebook can be viewed in Appendix H. As the main aim of this study is to understand the role of the library within a prison setting, the codes derived from case study data were organised into categories and sub-categories which explored the nature of the library at Hydebank. These final categories can be seen in the table below. Each category is discussed and illustrated in this chapter by verbatim comments from participant transcripts and field notes.

**Table 12.** List of categories and sub-categories, Hydebank case study

Core categories	Sub-categories
Library as place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Break from prison environment</li> <li>• Recreation and relaxation</li> <li>• Refuge or sanctuary</li> </ul>
Library as supporting self-determination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informal learning opportunities</li> <li>• Mitigating prior learning experiences</li> <li>• Self-directed learning</li> </ul>

Library as contributing to identity transformation and personal development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pro-social identity</li> <li>• Empowerment and personal development</li> <li>• Openness and self-reflection</li> </ul>
Library as promoting tolerance and cultural understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New perspectives and ideas</li> <li>• Deepening cultural understanding</li> </ul>

## 5.7 Library as place

Alongside the library's role in providing access to information, supporting education and offering recreational activities, prison library literature underlines the value of the unique social learning space offered by the library within the prison setting. A closer look at what Crewe et al. (2014, p.56) call the "emotional geography of prison life" can help deepen our understanding of what the library might mean to those who use it. In an environment characterised by high levels of security and control and resulting feelings of distrust and fear, there exist spaces or "emotion zones" which "enable the display of a wider range of feelings than elsewhere in the prison" (p.57). Although referring specifically to classrooms, the chapel and visit rooms, Warr (2016, p.19) adds the library to this list of "emotion zones" in a later publication. These zones are considered to be niche spaces within the prison which enable temporary sense of safety, support and autonomy. The following paragraphs outline some of the ways the library space was viewed by participants at Hydebank and how these perceptions and associations help to paint an understanding of the library as *place* within the prison. The library was viewed as a break from prison life, a place of relaxation and recreation and a sanctuary or refuge within the prison.

### 5.7.1 Break from prison life

In her study of prisoners' experiences of library services in Australia, one of the main themes noted by Garner was that of "library as escape" (2017, p.61), both in terms of library visits or the act of reading. She described both experiences as "an attempt by

prisoners to experience an escape from a reality that is difficult and undesirable to them” (p.114). Similar experiences were described by participants at Hydebank. Although reading was referred to as a means of escape, it was the time spent in the library space which participants seemed to value most. When asked what they considered to be the best thing offered by the library, female focus group participants noted the break it offers from their normal regime:

*“I think for me it’s just taking a break. I like coming here. It’s a break from work and classes.”* (Lisa)

*“Yeah it does your head good I reckon...It’s a good laugh. [The librarian’s] sound.”* (Cara)

*“I love books as well – I like this one I’m reading here! And I like to chat to [the librarian]. Clears your head a bit being here sometimes.”* (Ellie)

This sense of the library as a space which “clears your head” was also noted by male participants.

*“It’s quiet and you can chill out. And [the librarian’s] 100%. She’ll always talk to you. Say your head’s away, you can talk to her.”* (Aaron)

*“It’s calm and relaxed, you get a bit of peace. You don’t have people on your back all the time.”* (Conor)

These comments reflect the contrasting emotions experienced in the library and elsewhere in the prison. Conor even drew a contrast between the physical space of the library and the other classrooms. His interview took place in a classroom opposite the library, and when discussing the library space he commented,

*“Look around, look how bare it is in here. The library’s just a nicer room to be in, isn’t it?”* (Conor)



One female participant alluded to the normality of the library space, drawing parallels between her experiences of visiting both prison and public libraries:

*“I like the library because it’s real. It’s a normal place. I used to go to the library on the outside – I used to go there when I needed space and a time to think or read. Now I can do that in the prison and it’s even more important. If I think my head’s going or I just need a break I try to get to the library – it’s my comfort in here.”* (Michelle)

This affirms what is often noted in prison library literature. The library is considered to be a “normal” place within the prison which offers experiences similar to those available in the outside world (Vogel, 2009; Lehmann, 2011; Dilek-Kayaoglu and Demir, 2014).

#### 5.7.2 Recreation and relaxation

One way in which the library differs from other education spaces or workshop areas is that it is also considered to be a recreational space, where you can choose to spend your time reading or simply relaxing rather than taking part in mandatory classes or programmes. Michelle’s reflection below again highlights the contrast between how the time spent in the library differs to that spent elsewhere in the prison.

*“You can relax in the library. It’s your time. Nobody saying ‘do this, do that.’ Unless you’re being a bit of a dick! It gives you time on your own. Like this afternoon, it’s nice that I’m the only one and I can have a bit of a break and a chat. It’s a nice atmosphere. Sometimes on the landing there’s lots of tension, but then you come down here...it’s chillaxed. Yeah, that’s what I’d say, it relaxes me.”* (Michelle)

Participant observation of the Reading Aloud programme, alongside follow-up discussion with other participants, offered one of the most poignant examples of how the library offers this space both for relaxation and for a break from the more stressful aspects of prison life. Weekly visits from a volunteer affiliated with an organisation

called the Reader allowed the young men to simply enjoy a story or poem being read aloud to them, without any pressure to participate or contribute to discussion. The following description of the programme by the volunteer who leads it offers an insight into its recreational nature.

*"I start by reading a short story to the boys and then it's time for a smoking break – when they come back we take some time to discuss the story, and then we do the same again with the poem. The poem is usually related to the story in some way. Though if the story has been something heavy, I might choose a different kind of poem to switch it up and lighten the mood – maybe something seasonal or something I know will relate to the group of guys I have here. I know a lot of them have pets and speak really fondly about them, so I might read a poem about dogs one morning, to get them talking. The stories don't have a moral point or purpose. This isn't for rehabilitation. It's a choice, it's for enjoyment, it's how reading should be. We don't have underlying purposes."*  
(Volunteer, The Reader)

When asked about his participation in this session, Aaron noted how it offers a time to relax:

*"We'd sit there and chill while she read us a story, and she'd ask us questions about what's happening in the story. I'd just sit and relax."* (Aaron)

In speaking about the library more generally, he continued:

*"I know some people like to read and shit, but I don't, so I don't use it that way. I just use it for a bit of time out."* (Aaron)

This kind of attitude was equally evident through the observation of prisoners' behaviour in the library. During each visit, there were at least two or three individuals who spent their time reading magazines and newspapers or chatting to each other or to the librarian. Staff Member 1 referred to library sessions as *"more of a downtime"* for

prisoners when compared to education classes. This mirrors the findings of the first phase of this research, where library staff emphasised the recreational nature of the library and the relaxed environment it offered.

### 5.7.3 Refuge or sanctuary

Beyond a temporary relief or break from routine, the space of the library clearly serves as a sanctuary for some of the young men in particular. The following encounter brought this sharply into focus:

*This afternoon there was one student sitting by the desk in the library, flicking through the pages of a tattoo magazine. [The librarian] introduced me and told him about the research I'm doing and he quietly said, "You'll see me a good bit then miss, I'm in here all the time." We had a brief chat but he was quiet and continued to sit by the staff desk throughout the afternoon when we were joined by other students. I was later told that he is the library's "number one visitor." He has struggled with mental health issues since coming to Hydebank and the library is one of the only places he wants to be.*

...

*That same afternoon, I was introduced to another student in cookery class. I was told that when he first came in, he wouldn't leave the library. He didn't want to mix with the others [his specific crime made him more vulnerable to bullying] and he spent weeks sitting in the library and not participating in other classes. I was told that I wouldn't recognize that person now – [the librarian] spent time encouraging him to engage with other activities and workshops and now he only ever pops into the library to say a quick hello because his timetable is full of others classes. (Field notes, 11 September 2018)*

Vogel (2009, p.19). recognised this potential role of the library to new prisoners, describing the library as “the only welcoming environment and a sanctuary of opportunity for those new to the library.” This was evident at Hydebank through

observation of library engagement and further affirmed by the perceptions of staff members:

*“I think some of the guys would be lost without [the librarian] and the library, especially the ones who aren’t so used to this place. You’ve met some of them - you can see for yourself the role it plays.”* (Staff Member 2)

*“He came in this morning to get some books that might ‘get his mind off thinking so much in his cells.’ You hear that all the time. I think some of them just like coming here when their head’s away. They don’t always want to be stuck in the library either, but at times they need the space.”* (Staff Member 3)

It is necessary to acknowledge the limitations to this safe, normal space offered by the library. While some experiences within the library setting may have lasting impacts on individual library users, its role as a relaxing and recreational space is only temporary in nature. For prison sociologists considering the wider experience of incarceration, it might be considered a “transient escape from the emotional privation of incarceration” (Crewe et al., 2014, p.68). It is still of key importance for library researchers and policymakers when considering the role of the library, indicating that its role extends beyond providing access to books and other sources of information. In an interview with Participant I during Phase One of this study, this library staff member spoke of a visit to the Netherlands “where the government are trying to eradicate prison libraries in exchange for tablets because they feel everything offered by a prison library can be put in tablet form.” They continue, “It is our duty to make sure that we show just how much is in the library.” Findings from Hydebank clearly contradict the notion that the library is only useful for the resources it provides. Engagement with the space of the library reflects the kind of experience Vogel discusses in her primer on prison libraries, where the librarian creates “an oasis of equality and respect” in the midst of a “nonnurturing environment of deprivation” (2009, p.20). These findings affirm what was discovered when interviewing library staff members in the first phase of this study, where the library was seen to be a distinct and unique entity within the wider prison environment (section 5.3.2).

## 5.8 Library as supporting self-determination

As noted in previous chapters, the library offers a social learning space which is less dominated by control and security than other areas of the prison. Library users at Hydebank have the freedom to choose the extent to which they engage with the resources and programmes offered by the library, with little pressure or expectations from staff to participate or achieve results or qualifications. They are free to choose which intellectual and recreational interests to pursue through borrowing reading material, CDs or DVDs, or taking part in the various learning events and activities facilitated by library staff and volunteers. This heightened sense of autonomy was frequently mentioned by both male and female participants in this study, and the importance of facilitating this freedom of choice was recognised by both staff and volunteers. The findings presented in the following paragraphs show what it means for library users to have a space which prioritises non-compulsory, informal learning opportunities and how this differs from other learning experiences at Hydebank, as well as discussing how the library can help to mitigate negative prior learning experiences and support self-directed learning. A combination of these experiences paints the library as a place which supports self-determination, in the sense that freedom of choice and voluntary learning experiences can help to foster feelings of competence and individual autonomy (McKinney and Cotronea, 2011). This section also offers insights into some of the challenges caused by the transition of Hydebank into a Secure College, with the library being treated as a scheduled class within the education timetable.

### 5.8.1 Informal learning opportunities

There were several informal learning opportunities facilitated by the library during the period of fieldwork, some of which are evidenced in the timetable in Figure 18. Bookfolding activities were popular, especially in the afternoon sessions with women prisoners. The librarian demonstrated how to take part in this activity and provided written instructions to follow. Art materials were available to decorate the books. The photo below is an example of a final book created by an individual at Hydebank and

put on display in the “We Are All Human” exhibition at the Southbank Centre in 2016, in partnership with the Koestler Trust. Finished books were often sent home to family members as gifts.



**Figure 19.** Photo of ‘Dream’ bookfolding art piece created by Hydebank prisoner (Finlay, 2016)

Reading Aloud sessions took place every Wednesday morning, where a volunteer read short stories and poems to a group of young men in the library. A diversity workshop run in collaboration with Action Mental Health also took place in the library during the time of fieldwork. Most individuals present in the library participated in these activities, but there were others who chose to sit elsewhere in the library space and spend their time reading a magazine or book or using one of the tablets that had recently been acquired from the public library service. Library staff did not require everyone to participate in organised events, but simply asked that they respected those who were engaging with the activities.

Attitudes expressed toward Reading Aloud sessions illustrated how participants appreciated the voluntary nature of engagement. The volunteer running the sessions emphasised the importance of having this choice, and noted her frustration when people were forced to attend her sessions because of timetabling issues:

*“Sometimes people are kind of deposited in here because they don’t know where else to put them, and it’s clear they don’t want to be here. That’s frustrating, because I don’t want this to be something that’s forced on them – I want it to be a choice and something they enjoy.”* (Volunteer, the Reader)

The benefits of this activity were noted by staff and prisoners alike. One of the education staff members recognised the importance of this activity for male participants, noting the lack of pressure to participate or contribute to discussion:

*“In things like those storytelling workshops they can just choose to sit and listen, and not contribute if they don’t want to. There’s no pressure to speak up or to read or to say what to think. They can just enjoy the story if they want.”* (Staff Member 1)

The young men interviewed for the study also spoke highly of these sessions:

*“I really like coming to hear [the volunteer] read stories. I’m not timetabled for that you know. I just come because I want to. The literacy teacher lets me come.”* (Conor)

The volunteer who helps to deliver Shannon Trust’s peer learning scheme at Hydebank also recognised the significance of voluntary participation in their programme:

*“They can drop out whenever they want. There is no coercion to take part. That’s one of the big things about it, and I think that makes it appealing.”* (Volunteer, Shannon Trust)

When suggested by the education department that this scheme be turned into an accredited qualification, this was firmly rejected by the volunteer.

*“It’s not our ethos. Our ethos is that it’s a voluntary and informal programme. We know they respond well to that.”* (Volunteer, Shannon Trust)

A nationwide evaluation of this scheme also emphasised the value placed on the “informal, non-institutional nature” of the programme (Hopkins and Kendall, 2016, p.4). The importance of providing opportunities for voluntary and informal learning programmes is increasingly discussed in prison education research and the findings presented here highlight the role played by the library in facilitating these opportunities.

#### 5.8.2 Mitigating prior learning experiences

Literature exploring prison education often refers to prisoners’ prior negative experiences of school and a resulting reluctance to participate in prison education programmes (Irwin, 2003 and 2008; Farley and Pike, 2016; Warr, 2016). In her research on prison education in Northern Ireland, Irwin (2008, p.23) criticised the often “inflexible learning modes” offered in prison as they replicate “the negative learning episodes so deeply embedded in the prisoner’s identity”. These negative learning experiences were also voiced by both male and female participants in this study. Of the seven participants interviewed, five had either left school early or been expelled.

*“Well there’s not much to talk about before here – I was kicked out of school in 4th year, just before I did my GCSEs. School wasn’t my strong point.” (Daniel)*

*“Ah no, I didn’t really do school..I did that thing – is it AEP? [Alternative Education Provision] It’s a thing, they take you whenever you get expelled – but all we really did was a bit of English.” (Aaron)*

*“Oh no, I didn’t like school. Let’s not talk about that [laughs]. I left early and had kids, that’s what I did.” (Jemma)*

Existing negative associations with school, along with the perception that education is simply another tool used by prisons to reform prisoners can act as a barrier to participation in education classes (Warr, 2016). It is not hard to see then why the voluntary, informal nature of the library may be more appealing than formal education



classes. In removing the onus to participate and the pressure to achieve qualifications, the library is less likely to be seen as simply another method of rehabilitation. This positive attitude toward learning experiences in the library was noted by a number of male participants in particular:

*“It’s the choice thing. I hate being forced to do things. It’s all mind isn’t it – you think you’re not locking us up, but you’re imprisoning our minds. There’s no freedom of mind at all...[The library] is different. You’re not forced to do things. And it’s full of books! And you can ask a question without someone biting your head off.”* (Conor)

*“It’s not that I hated school, I just didn’t apply myself then. I was always getting in trouble. But I do like learning. I actually like educating myself here through using the library and watching documentaries.”* (Jack)

In speaking with a member of the public library service in Northern Ireland about the aim of the library at Hydebank, she recognised that many of the young people in particular *“may not have come through formal education in a very positive way, if at all.”* For her, the aim of the library is to *“provide an environment where they can learn and develop their skills for the future in a nice environment and have a bit of freedom...and pick up on missed opportunities”* (Libraries NI Staff Member).

### 5.8.3 Self-directed learning

Through exposure to a diverse range of reading materials and other resources, along with the choice of which learning programmes to attend, library users had the opportunity to practice self-directed learning. For one participant, this was a particularly important aspect of the library. When asked what he considered to be the best thing about the library, he responded:

*"You ever heard of the term 'self-education'? That's what I like about the library." (Jack)*

Another participant noted his experience of self-directed learning,

*"I zone out when people are around me and I can't take it in. I don't learn in those normal ways in the classroom. I was told I was dyslexic when I was really young. So I do like learning from DVDs and documentaries and stuff, but I'm also better at the practical learning." (Daniel)*

The chance to read about topics of personal interest was also noted by female participants.

*"I love reading. I just love to borrow whatever book gets me. That last one I read was brilliant. I like things like that, related to the war. And crime stories. I love any true stories like that...I like reading law books as well. It was great the other day I was reading something and I finally learnt what MO stood for, Modus Operandi or something like that, and it means mode of operation, and it's always been said but I never knew what it stood for, that was so interesting to me." (Michelle)*

Easy access to information which satisfies both the general interests and the intellectual pursuits of library users is an obvious benefit of a prison library service, and again contributes to a sense of autonomy and self-determination. Creating a prison environment which supports self-determination was central to the recommendations presented in the Ower's Report: "Since desistance is about discovering the ability to take responsibility for steering the direction of one's life, offender management processes and interventions need to encourage and respect self-determination" (Prison Review Team, 2011, p.18).

#### 5.8.4 Impact of transition into a Secure College

The contribution of the library to the autonomy and self-determination of individuals at Hydebank cannot be discussed without mentioning the challenges that were also expressed by participants, namely how Hydebank's transition to a Secure College has negatively impacted upon engagement with library services. The intention of the new regime is for students to be "out of cell" during the day (IMB, 2017, p.7). In ensuring that individuals are not in their cells during the day, there is now a strict timetable in place for attendance at education classes, vocational workshops and job sites. The library, which once had its doors open to anyone, has now also been timetabled and as such is being treated as more of a classroom than a library. The frustration at being timetabled to be somewhere at every moment of the day was expressed daily during fieldwork visits.

*"Whatever works with the timetable. And if you say you don't wanna do it, then you're locked up all day. It's either education or locked up all day." (Aaron)*

*"No I didn't wanna go to the library this morning, but they would have sent me back to the landing. So you'd be sent back to your cell, and the electricity would be turned off. That's what would have happened if I'd refused. (Junior)*

*"No choice, never. I never got to choose what I wanted to do. You're timetabled and that's that. And if you don't come down to education you get locked in your room. I don't like the way we're being forced to come down to education. Sometimes I just wanna be on the landing you know. But then that's counted as a refusal and you'll get adversed. They say they don't lock you up, but they do unless you take part in education." (Conor)*

The following interaction which took place during the focus group with female participants highlights both the frustration at how the operation of the library has changed, and at the timetabling process in general.

Ellie: *"[Before] you were able to come over when you wanted, and spend whatever time you needed to. For some of us, 15-20 minutes is enough in here."*

Ruby: *"Yeah, it doesn't feel like a library when you're being forced to come. There's no library vibe."*

Ellie: *"It's bullshit. I'm so angry that I'm even here now, I shouldn't be here. And I'm not saying anything against the library, but this is my day off. I should be up on the wing but I was told I wasn't allowed, so they've just thrown me in here. I work at the weekends so today is one of my days off and I'm being made to sit in the library for hours."*

Lisa: *"It's true. They do just dump us now...It's the same with the rest of the classes – it's just whoever can take us. It's not right. I know we're in prison, but we're human beings too. It's cause they can't be arsed figuring out the timetable. They talk about purposeful activity – what purpose? It's bullshit."*

Education and library staff were equally annoyed by this change in timetabling, and the library was referred to as a *"dumping ground"* for people who did not fit elsewhere in the education timetable (Staff Member 1). It was also noted that the timetabling of library sessions reduced access for some prisoners:

*"One of the things about timetabling as well – [the librarian] is not as free to go around and provide services to prisoners when they're not in the library. Before she would have brought books around more to those who couldn't get to the library – now with a stricter timetable, she has less freedom to leave and do that."* (Staff Member 2)

The library has been portrayed as a place where individuals can make choices about how to spend their time and what educational or recreational interests to pursue. The positive attitudes relayed by library users, along with the frustrations expressed by both staff and prisoners about the library being timetabled into a prisoner's daily

regime, underlines the extent to which prisoners value the freedom of choice typically associated with a library.

## 5.9 Library as contributing to identity transformation and personal development

As discussed in section 2.7.2, existing research shows that sustained desistance from crime entails a positive transformation in how individuals perceive themselves and how they are viewed by society (Maruna, 2001). There is a general consensus among prison researchers that prisons are detrimental to the process of positive identity transformation, often cementing instead of breaking criminal identities (McNeill and Weaver, 2010; Liebling, 2012). As a result, researchers have urged prison policymakers to shape regimes around opportunities for self-reflection and identity development. This can be seen in the review of the Northern Ireland Prison Service in 2011. One of the seven fundamental characteristics put forward in this report for supporting change in prisons is “supporting the development of a non-criminal identity” (PRT, 2011, p.22). The following paragraphs consider how library services at Hydebank contribute, at least in part, to the development of a more pro-social identity. They focus particularly on staff treatment of prisoners in the library, the culture of empowerment and self-efficacy cultivated by library staff and volunteers and the opportunities for self-reflection and discussion of identity and diversity.

### 5.9.1 Pro-social identity

As part of Hydebank’s transition into a Secure College, the young men are no longer labelled as “young offenders” but rather as “students.” On the surface, this appears to be a positive development which has taken on board the importance of positive labelling for the process of desistance. It is a well-intentioned attempt to remove the stigma of being negatively defined by the crimes associated with an individual. It is perhaps too early to surmise how this step has affected those detained at Hydebank, but most individuals spoken to in this study did not react well to being termed

“students.” Comments such as *“This isn’t school. I can’t leave at the end of the day”* and *“they call us students but we all know we’re in prison”* reflect the general attitude toward this change. This view was echoed among female prisoners, who were also being called students despite many of them not even participating in education classes. Staff members also seemed unconvinced about this change in terminology. The annual report by the Independent Monitoring Board in 2017 noted a list of staff complaints, which included the following: *“Some of the young men are not interested in being ‘students’ and the idea of Hydebank being a ‘College’ is questionable”* (p.13). A staff member in this case study commented:

*“I do call them students or learners in my classroom – I always have. But if I’m on the landing I’ll think of them more as inmates, and then students in education. It is a jail. And it’s their home as well, it’s not just a college.”* (Staff Member 1)

Renaming what we call people in prison is important, but only if it reflects how individuals are actually treated. In the library at Hydebank, it was the treatment of prisoners by library staff which seemed to make a difference. The contrast of how library staff differed from other prison staff in their treatment toward and perception of individuals was reflected by Michelle’s comment:

*“Another good thing about the library. [The librarian] treats you like a human being. She doesn’t treat you like a number.”* (Michelle)

When asked about the best aspect of the library, numerous participants alluded to the rapport with library staff. Both male and female participants referred to the librarian as being “good craic” and taking the time to talk and listen to them. The respect held for the librarian was also recognised by other staff members:

*“And you can tell the students love it. And they love [the librarian]. She knows how to have banter but also to show authority when it’s needed. Everyone loves the craic in the library.”* (Staff Member 2)

The reliability and trust associated with library services and library staff was a significant finding of the first phase of this research project (section 4.3.2), and this was reflected again in the views espoused by both prisoners and staff members at Hydebank.

*“In here’s sweet. [The librarian] knows where everything is. She helps us out with the books and DVDs and stuff we want to look at. We can’t always get what we want, but she tries.”* (Daniel)

*“It’s fantastic. [The librarian] supports us with everything. She gets any resources we need. She supports everyone really – us, prisoners, officers, all staff. She really goes above and beyond.”* (Staff Member 2)

The significance of this rapport with library staff cannot be overstated and has already been discussed in depth in section 4.3.2. Reflecting on living conditions in prisons, Crewe (2015, p.52) notes, “The relationship between frontline staff and prisoners does as much to determine whether the sentence is survivable or de-humanising as the frequency and quality of visits, or the availability of education opportunities.” Even moreso than the educational opportunities provided by the library, the availability of a trusted member of staff who treats individuals simply as library users instead of prisoners can play a crucial role in the overall experience of incarceration.

#### 5.9.2 Empowerment and personal development

Beyond treating library users with respect and dignity, both library staff and library-based volunteers work to support individuals in developing their literacy, personal and social skills. Reflecting on the term “personal development” and what it meant for prisoners, Liebling (2012, p.7) spoke of an environment which “helps prisoners with offending behaviour, preparation for release and the development of their potential.” In the library, staff help to develop this potential from a place of genuine care and support and not because they are under pressure from the prison or elsewhere to

reach targets or achieve results. One example of this support is the provision of Shannon Trust's peer-learning programme, Toe-by-Toe. The volunteer responsible for facilitating this programme at Hydebank reflected on the perceived benefits of choosing to participate in this scheme:

*"The mentors thoroughly enjoy doing it. They're always paired up with people they get on with. Learners realise they've started something that they didn't think they could do, and then realise they can. That sense of achievement – that's what motivates them. Both mentor and learner realise they are achieving something and making full use of their time inside.*

*There is recognition of their achievement through certificates. And you know it's something they can go out and tell potential employers, that they took part in this. Whether it's as a mentor or a learner, it shows initiative and dedication. Even taking that first step is a big thing. Especially with the young guys – they might be embarrassed at first so even to sign up to learning is a big step. And of course it can increase their confidence – both in their ability to read and just in general. Achieving something like that, it can definitely increase confidence.*  
(Volunteer, Shannon Trust)

Other prison staff members recognised the importance of celebrating achievements and showcasing the work of prisoners in the library.

*"The library ran a six-week creative writing group with a poet from the outside. They produced a book of poems which is on display in the library, I'll show you... We also ran the Reading Ahead challenge for six weeks, and when they completed it we had a little prizegiving event and food put on by the Governor in the Cabin."* (Staff Member 3)

This book of poems was displayed on the staff desk by the entrance of the library and was excitedly shown off by prisoner participants throughout the duration of the case study. Toward the end of the fieldwork period, both the library and art department at



Hydebank collaborated with a local public library to create an exhibition of prisoners' art. A staff member in the public library service reflected both on this exhibition and similar events:

*“There was an art exhibition and we had a launch in Newtownbreda library which was very well-attended and very popular, so we do try to facilitate launches and exhibitions of prisoners' work...Another initiative was, we had three translations of Tony Macaulay's trilogy, Paperboy, Breadboy and All Grewed Up, transcribed into braille by prisoners and we had a little launch where they donated those to Lisburn City Library and we had a bit of publicity for it...so I think that's a very positive thing. So it's about showcasing some of the positive things.”* (Libraries NI Staff Member)

These examples also show the importance of partnership with others – in this case, with external organisation and public libraries – to provide a more holistic and supportive library experience for people in prison.

### 5.9.3 Openness and self-reflection

In offering a safe space for open and honest conversations, the library facilitated discussions focused on identity and personal experiences. During the period of fieldwork, these discussions were observed both through directed conversations during planned programmes and events but also through naturally occurring conversations between library users and staff during general library sessions. One such conversation was sparked during an afternoon visit with male library users. One reader had a copy of “King of the Gypsies”, a memoir by Bartley Gorman. This led to a lengthy discussion about the history of the travelling community in Ireland and England. Two of the young men in the library at this time self-identified as Irish Travellers and shared their own views and experiences with others in the group. This pride in speaking about their identity was also evident in a follow-up interview with one of these participants. Before the first interview question was asked, he stated:

*"I left school at 16, that's what we did. I'm a traveller, it's our way of life. I'm a traveller. It's in my blood. I can read and write. I maybe don't write so well but I'm good at reading and I like it."* (Conor)

The diversity workshop mentioned previously also entailed guided conversations about identity and perception of self. The men present at this workshop were asked to consider ways they might identify themselves, and they talked about being brothers, sons, Irish, British, and travellers. Ensuing conversations about religious and political differences, which will be discussed further in the final section of this chapter, also allowed for critical self-reflection during the workshop.

The same participant who spoke with pride about his identity as a traveller also reflected on his general experience of being incarcerated:

*"This doesn't help. It doesn't stop us reoffending. Hydebank only shows us what it's like when you commit a crime and get locked up. Why don't you show us what a different life would look like? In here only makes you worse...I don't know, but I know prison doesn't work. They should only have it for really high profile prisoners."* (Conor)

One of the aims of this research is to better understand the social context in which prison library services are offered, and insights about prisoners' experiences of incarceration help contribute to our understanding of the role and potential impact of library services. It would be naïve to suggest that engagement with library services alone can be a transformative experience for prisoners. What these findings do suggest however is that the resources, space and learning opportunities provided by the library can, for some individuals, act as a catalyst for self-reflection and identity development.

## 5.10 Library as promoting tolerance and cultural understanding

One of the strengths of a public library is its ability to draw together individuals of all ages, cultures and backgrounds who may not otherwise encounter each other. In their research on libraries and social capital, Cox et al. (2000, p.4) noted that “in the sharing of the resources and physical space, people will meet others outside their close circles and recognise both commonalities and differences in familiar surroundings which are seen as a safe space.” Findings have already shown the library to be a safe space within the prison which enables prisoners to be open and vulnerable with staff and other library users. The findings presented in this section illustrate how the social interactions within the library space can help offer new perspectives and ideas to individuals and deepen cultural understanding amongst prisoners.

### 5.10.1 New perspectives and ideas

A diversity workshop took place in the library with the young men during the second week of fieldwork. This had been organised by library staff in conjunction with volunteers from Action Mental Health. Two volunteers, eight participants and one library staff member were present. The workshop included a mixture of written activities, presentations, videos and guided discussions focused on diversity, culture, identity and family. Those present engaged particularly well with one of the volunteers who was from Romania. As two participants self-identified as Irish travellers, they were eager to ask her about Roma gypsies and make comparisons between the different lifestyles. A staff member described the aim and relevance of this workshop:

*“It was really about how we make judgements about other people when we first meet them, even when we don’t know them. And that happens all the time in here!” (Staff Member 3)*

The same workshop was carried out with female prisoners a few weeks prior to the fieldwork period. One of the female participants who attended the workshop shared her thoughts on it:

*“Those diversity women came in, on my first day back actually. I spent half my time laughing, it was great craic. We got to see all different sides of people. One of them – where was she from? Romania, I think. I didn’t know much about Romania before she came in. But that’s the only event I’ve been at. It’s a good socialising place, the library.”* (Jemma)

Conversations about cultural issues and beliefs also occurred during ordinary library sessions, sometimes sparked by books or magazines being read or questions asked by the librarian. During the observation stage of fieldwork, both male and female prisoners were frequently heard speaking about their life before and during incarceration, sharing personal challenges and differing points of view. One male participant noted:

*“I get on ok with some of the guys here. The one you were just talking to - I’ve known him for a while. We both like reading and learning about different things and getting into wee arguments and debates, but that’s good I guess.”* (Jack)

Not all participants, however, spoke positively of the social aspect of the library.

*“We have all our classes together here. So I’m always with these guys. Some of them do my head in, but that’s the way it is.”* (Daniel)

*“I mean I have been in the library, but it’s just not something for me. I’d be too bored in it. And I know I’d mess about. And all the people they put me in with – they’re not the people I’d usually be with. I don’t talk to them.”* (Junior)

The interview with Junior took place because he was frustrated at being timetabled to be in the library that day when he did not want to be there, and was glad for an

opportunity to escape and participate in the interview. His comment highlights again the importance of having the freedom to choose whether or not to visit the library. It has already been noted that compulsory activities in prison can lead to a reluctance to participate. Social interactions in the library can evidently lead to positive self-reflection and engagement with a diverse group of people, but these interactions are only likely to be beneficial when they stem from voluntary participation.

#### 5.10.2 Deepening cultural understanding

Experiences of incarceration in Northern Ireland are compounded by the deeply embedded political, cultural and religious divisions across communities and across the prison estate. Although not a main focus of this study, the researcher was cognizant of the existing cultural differences and resulting tensions amongst both male and female prisoners. This was evident during the first day of fieldwork, when a group of male prisoners visited the library to check if *“any more books on the Troubles”* had been ordered recently. One participant shared:

*“I use the library to educate myself, about my religion, my culture, why Northern Ireland is so important. I do this through books and by talking to [the librarian], and just by chatting about stuff.”* (Jack)

Another recognised the centrality of culture and religion to society in Northern Ireland:

*“It’s a bit different here. I’m from Liverpool, where religion doesn’t matter. What matters is where you come from, what part of Liverpool. Here it’s religion.”* (Daniel)

The diversity workshop addressed some of these cultural issues, prompting lively discussion between participants about their own experiences and cultural differences.

*The group became quite animated when talking about the political and religious situation in Northern Ireland. When a picture of rioting was shown on*

*screen, the boys talked about how much they missed rioting, how it was it was just “good craic” and that it actually brought people together. This led to a conversation about drugs and how they also helped to bring the two communities together. “Protestants and Catholics, we’d buy drugs from each other, and then take them and just have a good laugh together. (Field notes, 28 September 2018)*

Conversations facilitated by the workshop volunteers within the neutral environment of the library enabled these conversations to take place freely. A separate study could be conducted on these interactions alone and would require a more nuanced approach than has been taken in this research project. For the purpose of addressing the stated research questions, it is enough to note that the library at Hydebank was a place where individuals could comfortably share experiences of their differing cultural backgrounds, beliefs and experiences.

#### 5.12 Summary of findings

This chapter has provided insights into library provision and user engagement in a specific and unique institutional setting in Northern Ireland. The study was limited by a short period of time in the field and a small sample of interview participants. The strengths of the findings lie in the triangulation of data from field notes, participant observation, focus groups and interviews to examine the role of the library at Hydebank. It is recommended that future studies look more specifically at the separate populations, taking on board the different learning and information needs of male and female prisoners. While this case study has shed light on the experiences of library engagement at Hydebank, it has also raised questions and issues deserving of further investigation. Recommendations for future research arising from this case study will be discussed in the final chapter of this thesis.

What is clear from the findings is that the library offers an important social learning space for both populations, with opportunities for self-directed learning that may not

be found elsewhere in the prison. In contrast to the controlling nature of the wider prison regime, the library offers a space where freedom of choice is encouraged. The freedom to choose whether or not to participate in library-based programmes and events was acknowledged and appreciated by most participants in the study. The importance of voluntary participation was also recognised by volunteers, library and education staff members. It is important therefore that the current timetabling of library sessions be revised to maintain the voluntary element that is so intrinsic to an authentic library experience. The library was further identified as a place where prisoners are able to temporarily escape the challenges and the stress of prison life. The positive rapport between prisoners and library staff led to a culture of trust and openness in the library, where individuals spoke freely about ideas and beliefs, family and personal challenges. The social interaction between individuals who may not otherwise interact in the prison enabled the sharing of ideas, and promoted understanding and tolerance between a diverse group of people.

Although access to books, DVDs and other sources of information were discussed during this study, the most appreciated aspect of the library seemed to be the space and the social learning environment it offered to prisoners. The following chapter will discuss the provision of library services at HMP Barlinnie, where the role of the library in providing physical resources surpasses its role as a social learning environment. The final chapter will draw together findings from each case study and discuss the implications of this research.

## Chapter Six: HMP Barlinnie

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings from a case study carried out at HMP Barlinnie, an adult men's prison in Scotland. As much as was feasible, the case study mirrored the approach taken at Hydebank, with both prisoners and staff being interviewed to get a thorough insight into the role and value of the library within a specific context. The prison service in Scotland is comparable to that of Northern Ireland in that both have developed recent strategies shaped around supporting the desistance of prisoners and there has been a resulting overhaul of the provision of education across the prison estate. Barlinnie holds a very different population to that of Hydebank with distinct educational and information needs. It is intended to be a local prison serving the west of Scotland, holding both remand and sentenced prisoners of all categories (SPS, 2019). The management and provision of library services at Barlinnie is equally distinct. The findings are therefore not intended to be compared but presented as separate case studies. Chapter Seven will then draw together findings from both case studies and the first phase of the research project to discuss, along with the existing conceptual framework, what this research has revealed about the role and value of library services in a prison setting.

This chapter begins by describing the research approach taken to the case study. It then presents an overview of recent changes made to education and library provision across the Scottish Prison Service (SPS), before introducing the research site and presenting findings from data collection. These findings are presented both descriptively and thematically, with the aim of exploring both the role currently played by the library at Barlinnie and how the development of future library services could best meet the needs of prisoners here.



## 6.2 Approach to case study

As with the previous case study, the methodology employed was designed to learn more about the context in which library services are provided as well as to hear from both staff and prisoners about their experiences of providing and participating in library and education programmes. An initial observation period served to familiarise the researcher with the prison environment and the prisoners' daily routine, and provided an opportunity to seek out potential participants for the study. At the end of the two weeks' fieldwork at Barlinnie, the opportunity arose to visit two other prison libraries in Scotland. Field notes from these observations will be briefly referred to when discussing the wider provision of library services across the SPS.

The observation period at Barlinnie was followed by interviews with willing staff and prisoners, a focus group with prisoners and participant observation of an education induction class. The first set of interviews took place in a small room adjoined to the radio station, which lay opposite the library in the "Communications Hub". No staff were present in the room, but the door was propped open so that officers had a clear view of the area. One interview took place in a room beside the gym, and again an officer was stationed nearby. The remainder of the interviews took place during the second week of fieldwork in the education department. It was not possible to be alone in a room with prisoners as this would have required extra formal training. The following fieldwork diary extract provides an insight into the challenge of ensuring a level of privacy in a prison setting when this is the case:

*As I haven't had the required training, I am not allowed to be alone with prisoners in a classroom. It is suggested that I conduct interviews at the back of a classroom but I explain that my aim is to gather individual views, without being distracted or impacted by the presence of others. One officer suggests that I sit in the office directly behind their desk, with the door open, but again I explain that I do not want interviews to be within hearing distance of prison staff as this might skew their answers. Fortunately, she understands and it is eventually decided that I can set up a table and chair in the education corridor. I*

*am still in view of prison officers, but they are stationed far enough along the corridor that they are not within hearing distance. I am told that my chair must be the one closest to the officers' desk, so that if anything happens I can quickly roll my chair backwards toward them. I am aware that this is not the ideal setup to make a prisoner feel at ease during an interview, but it is the best possible option at this point. (Field notes, 30 October 2018)*

Interviews with library and education staff took place in their respective staffrooms, and the opportunity arose to interview an officer working in the family visiting centre. A final interview was held with a stakeholder in the SPS outside of the prison setting. The focus group was held with a group of prisoners who were students in a Higher Reading class in the education department. Although the teacher was not present for the full duration of the focus group, she did walk into the classroom every few minutes to ensure it was running well. Observation of an induction class also took place in the education department, where new prisoners were informed about the education options available to them and how to sign up for classes. An account of this observation is provided in Appendix E.

### 6.3 Sample and demographics

An opportunistic approach was again taken with the sample of prisoners who participated in this case study, with prison staff helping to identify willing participants. As interviews were mostly confined to the Communications Hub and education department, almost all participants were involved with education in some way. Three prisoner participants were part of the radio station working party which, although a full-time job in the prison, was also run alongside a Communications module offered by Fife College. One exception was a prisoner passman (the name given to prisoners who hold a paid job in the prison) who worked in the gym and was available for an interview on the final day of fieldwork. Interviews took place with both mainstream prisoners and sex offenders, who will be referred to as E-Hall prisoners throughout this case study. It is important to note the distinction between these populations, as the

category of prisoners had an impact on their experiences of education and library engagement. As E-Hall prisoners were separated from all other prisoners at Barlinnie and followed a separate routine, they spent more time in education classes and had more access to the library than others. Each participant was again asked to choose a pseudonym for the study, to ensure anonymity. The table below notes the relevant demographics of each interview participant.

**Table 13.** Overview of prisoner participants at HMP Barlinnie

<b>Individual interviews (Prisoners)</b>			
<b>Chosen pseudonym</b>	<b>Participation in work/education</b>	<b>Sentenced/Remand</b>	<b>Category of prisoner</b>
Steven	Radio working party	Sentenced	Mainstream
John	Radio working party	Sentenced	Mainstream
Joe	Radio working party	Sentenced	Mainstream
Kieran	Gym passman	Sentenced	Mainstream
Michael	Education	Remand	Mainstream
Dean	Education	Remand	Mainstream
Deepak	Education	Sentenced	Mainstream
David	Education	Sentenced	E-Hall
Kurt	Education	Sentenced	E-Hall
Ahmed	Education	Remand	E-Hall
<b>Focus group participants</b>			
William	Members of Higher Reading class. All E-Hall prisoners.		
Matty			
Andy			
Sean			
Roddy			
Marcus			

**Table 14.** Overview of staff participants at HMP Barlinnie

Staff Interviews	
Job role	Participant Name
Prison education staff	Tutor A Tutor B
Prison library staff	Library Officer A
Family Contact Officer (FCO)	Family Officer A
Stakeholder in prison education	Stakeholder A

#### 6.4 Data analysis and presentation of findings

Notes were again taken during the focus group and interviews, as a recording device was not permitted at Barlinnie. These notes were written up more fully in an empty classroom between interviews, and extensive field notes were once more written at the end of each site visit. Transcripts were later uploaded to NVivo and analysed thematically as detailed in section 3.5.6. This case study leans more heavily on description than the previous case study. As the library at Barlinnie is primarily used for borrowing books, most of the conversations held with prisoners centred around the frustration at the lack of access to a more comprehensive library service, rather than engagement with different library programmes or activities. A thorough description of how the library is run, how education classes are facilitated and the relationship between the two serves to clarify the reasons behind prisoners' attitudes toward their experiences in prison. Discussing the purpose of case study research, Pickard (2007, p.102) emphasises that "it is understanding the case that should be paramount" and not simply trying to understand a particular phenomenon. This means that a case study should "provide a holistic account of the case and in-depth knowledge of the specific through rich descriptions situated in context" (ibid.). This chapter seeks to provide a rich description of the case, before offering a thematic analysis of prisoners' experiences. Together, the descriptive element and thematic analysis of prisoners' experiences offer a detailed understanding of the current role of

the library at Barlinnie and how future development could better meet the needs of prisoners here. The analysis is considered in light of the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter Two and the following secondary research questions:

- How have recent policy changes impacted upon the provision of prison library services in Northern Ireland and Scotland?
- How do staff members perceive the role and value of prison library services?
- How do prisoners perceive the role and value of prison library services?
- What informal learning opportunities are offered by the prison library?
- How does the relationship between the library and education department impact upon a prisoner's experience of learning?

Verbatim comments from both prisoners and staff are used to illustrate findings, along with occasional excerpts from field notes to give a better understanding of the context of the case study.

## 6.5 Education provision in the Scottish Prison Service

An overview of education and library policies within the SPS, based on publicly available written content, was presented in the introductory chapter (section 1.3.3). The following paragraphs re-iterate some of the most relevant policies, adding further knowledge about the provision of library services through data collected from staff, prisoners and stakeholders in this case study. Scotland's revised approach to incarceration led to the re-shaping of learning and skills provision across the prison estate, and education became a central focus of supporting people in prison. As noted in the most recent *Learning and Skills Strategy* (SPS, 2016, p.3) "...education is central to our vision of unlocking potential and transforming the lives of people within our care." Their attitude toward education differs somewhat to the prison service in England and Wales. Stakeholder A considers their approach to be "*more outward, rational and open*" because "*our definition of a literate person is broader than other*

*parts of the UK.*" The SPS is an agency of the Scottish Government and is therefore obliged to deliver on various government strategies, including that of adult learning. This broad definition of a literate person is reflected in the vision of the Scottish Government:

"By 2020 Scotland's society and economy will be stronger because more of its adults are able to read, write and use numbers effectively in order to handle information, communicate with others, express ideas and opinions, make decisions and solve problems, as family members, workers, citizens and lifelong learners." (The Scottish Government, 2011, p.4)

The implication of this vision for people in prison is to not only focus on developing prisoners' reading and writing skills, but to recognise that literacy *"includes the ability to form ideas and expressions"* (Stakeholder A). Referring to the existing low levels of literacy in prison, Stakeholder A continues, *"There has been an over-focus in these areas to the exclusion of other areas. The balance hasn't been right."* He also recognises that education in prison has *"failed to provide an exciting range of subjects that spark an interest in learning and encourage participation in education classes."* In order to combat this lack of stimulation and to encourage higher levels of engagement with learning opportunities, the SPS have introduced project-themed learning across the prison estate. During the period of fieldwork carried out at Barlinnie, prisoners were working on a World War I memorial project in collaboration with both prison tutors and staff from a local museum. They were also completing projects related to mental health and wellbeing which focused particularly on the cessation of smoking, as there was an upcoming ban on smoking in Scotland's prisons. Education staff members spoke positively about this style of teaching and learning, and the level of participation it generated from prisoners:

*"I think it works well. It's a bit more creative than it used to be. Not everyone is interested but you'll always get that in prison. Some of them get really engaged though, and most are enjoying this current project. We're looking at the World Wars, and there's always a big interest in that. One guy asked could he do some*

*creative writing based around it, even though he'd only been asked to draw something.” (Tutor A)*

*“It gives us opportunities to challenge their views – it makes them think more deeply about what they believe and why. And it allows people at all different levels to take part in the project at the same time. We’re seeking creative ways for learning, and trying to construct education around the needs of the learner.”*  
(Tutor B)

Interview participants in the education department discussed the creative projects in which they had recently been involved. One spoke proudly about his artwork for the World War I project, which was currently displayed on the wall in the education corridor. Another participant discussed the research he was doing for an article on the upcoming smoking ban:

*“I do a lot in education. I’m down here almost every day. Art, creative projects – mental health is the topic of the moment in that...At the moment I’m writing about the smoking ban – you know that’s starting at the end of November? Well, I’m doing a bit of research for that.”* (Deepak)

A final thing to note about the provision of education across the SPS is that, until 2018, education was outsourced to both New College Lanarkshire and Fife College. In explaining this organisational structure, Stakeholder A noted that *“the cultures were distinctly different so it was really difficult to engender a consistency of culture”* across prisons. After a procurement process, Fife College secured a contract with the SPS and is now the sole provider of education across all of Scotland’s prisons. This restructure took place shortly before fieldwork at Barlinnie began, and there was some clear unease among tutors whose roles had been impacted by these changes. Similar to the case at Hydebanks, the education department was in a state of transition and adapting to new procedures.

## 6.6 Library service provision in the Scottish Prison Service

The 2014 *Review of Purposeful Activity* recognised that library provision varied widely across establishments and recommended that a review of library services be carried out “with a view to identifying best practice and establishing a set of agreed standards for the delivery of library services” (p.62). This audit took place in 2015 by the SPS and in consultation with the Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC) and the City of Edinburgh Libraries. Their co-authored report affirmed the inconsistency of management and service delivery noted in the Purposeful Activity Review. It was evident at the time of fieldwork that significant improvements had been made since this audit had been carried out. The establishment with the lowest score in the audit was now considered to be an exemplary library service. Described as once being “*a cupboard with little access*” (Stakeholder A), this was now a fully-stocked, colourful and inviting library space at the heart of the prison’s learning centre. Reflections on an afternoon visit to this library are noted below:

*The reception area of the prison is in the same space as the library, so it is the first area we see on arrival. It felt like walking into a normal public library space! There is a large open seating area and a coffee stand in one corner. The space is modern and brightly coloured and books are lined on shelves across each wall. There are a number of small rooms off to the side, which I soon learn are used as small classrooms or meeting rooms. The space is next door to a larger educational/workshop area. I was impressed by the visible promotion of reading and family literacy programmes – there are posters for the Six Book Challenge in the main library and when I walk through to the education area I see a display of childrens’ books to be used for Storybook Dads. I’m informed that the library works alongside the local public library and was completely revamped following their ‘damning’ audit a few years previously. (Field notes, 1 November, 2018)*



Reflecting on his time spent at this open prison, a participant in the Barlinnie case study also spoke positively about its library space. His comment also highlights the inconsistency of library service provision across establishments:

*“That was my first stint in prison. Their library is bigger, more relaxed, like a public library. But then that’s more of an open prison so I guess it makes sense. Maybe it depends on the security level of prisoners as to what the library is like.”* (Sean, focus group)

Another implication of the Purposeful Activity Review was that libraries were now placed under the remit of the Learning and Skills department. One of the changes made by the Head of Learning and Skills was to start the “National Libraries Forum”, where library staff from each prison meet together quarterly to work together and share good practice. Stakeholder A also noted that libraries now had to provide outcomes to the SPS:

*“Libraries are really the only thing now in the prison that haven’t been accountable, that haven’t had to show outcomes. They were more concerned with numbers...but we’re now looking more at outcomes instead. So that puts the pressure on. The Governor now has more of a responsibility to make sure the library is running well”* (Stakeholder A)

It is important to note that the current case study was carried out during this period of library re-development across the Scottish prison estate, and that findings may have been very different had the case study been carried out at a different prison. This was also observed by Stakeholder A, as they described the different levels of library and education access across establishments:

*“We’re focusing on trying to make the necessary changes to other prisons where the library hasn’t been given the same attention and so isn’t offering what it should be. The reality is, where you are determines what level of education access you can access. You’ve probably seen it yourself in Barlinnie. If*

*you'd been somewhere else, you would have seen a very different setup."*

(Stakeholder A)

This serves to highlight the lack of consistency which exists across prison library provision, which is true of prison libraries globally and not a challenge exclusive to prisons in Scotland (Lehmann and Locke, 2005; Krolak, 2019).

It will become clear that the library at the focus of this case study – while it is arguably well-stocked and well-staffed – has little in terms of library services or literacy programmes and events in comparison to other prison libraries in Scotland. The result is that, rather than speaking in any depth about engagement with library services, participants more frequently voiced their frustrations about the lack of access to a well-rounded library service and discussed the changes they would make to library provision if possible. Findings instead reveal the existing information needs and information behaviour of prisoners, their ways of passing time and coping with the prison environment and the social capital generated during incarceration (Table 15). In discussing each of these themes, both the current and potential role of the library is considered. Findings are again considered alongside existing knowledge of the sociology of prison life, desistance literature and the conceptual framework presented in Chapter Two to offer a more thorough understanding of the experiences described by participants. A detailed description of the library services at Barlinnie and a discussion of the relationship between the education department and library is offered before presenting thematic findings. Both the descriptive and thematic aspects of the case study will help to present a full picture of the case in question and will address the stated research questions.

**Table 15.** List of categories and sub-categories, Barlinnie case study

Core Categories	Sub-categories
Information and communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information poor environment</li> <li>• Information needs</li> <li>• Ways of accessing information</li> </ul>
Coping with the prison environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boredom and lack of stimulation</li> <li>• Passing time</li> <li>• Library resources</li> </ul>
Generating social capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informal networks</li> <li>• Agency</li> <li>• Trust and reliability</li> </ul>

## 6.7 Library service provision at HMP Barlinnie

The library at Barlinnie is run in conjunction with Glasgow Life, a charity which “delivers cultural, sporting and learning activities on behalf of Glasgow City Council” (Glasgow Life, 2018). There is an existing agreement with Glasgow Life for the provision of resources, and library officers work closely with a public library staff member for recommendation of stock and development of services. This public librarian also works alongside officers in the family visiting centre, where there is a small reading area providing books for both children and parents to read together during visits.

Although once staffed a professional librarian, the library is now run by two prison officers. These officers are responsible for both the library and the prison radio station, *Barbed Wireless*. Both the library and radio station are situated within the Communications Hub. The area is also staffed by a member of Fife College, who delivers a communications module with the men working at the radio station. When asked about running the library as officers, one staff member noted the positive aspect of this dual role:

*“Library staff always had to have a uniformed officer in the library, but if there was a shortage of staff or something happened on the wings they couldn’t bring prisoners over, so there wasn’t always great access to the library. Because we’re here, we’re always able to escort prisoners if we have to – it’s the plus of being a library officer.” (Library Officer A)*

Interestingly, this was an aspect of the library which some of the prisoners pinpointed and discussed. Despite a positive attitude toward the individual officers, there was a recognition that professional librarians may be better equipped to run a more comprehensive library service. The following comments were made by prisoners who had been incarcerated at other prisons where the library had been staffed by professional librarians and offered a wider range of services than at Barlinnie:

*“It’s run by officers, but to be honest I think it’d work better if we had proper librarians working in there. I reckon librarians would have more knowledge about things.” (Kurt)*

*“And I know some libraries have actual librarians there and team up with the local library. The last place I was in – it was run by a local library and had a librarian. It made a big difference. It wasn’t just about getting out books – the librarian did loads of other stuff. They even had this thing where they learned to do braille and made things in braille, I think it was part of a charity thing. Look, distributing books is not being a librarian. And the officers here, they’re in charge of the radio too, aren’t they? I guess they don’t have time to do all the stuff that might happen if it was a proper library.” (David)*

Statistics kept by library officers boasted high records of library visits per week, but there was a general consensus between both staff and prisoners that visits were too short. Prisoners who signed up for a library visit were allocated a thirty-minute timeslot in their daily schedule but, as this included time to be escorted to and from the halls, there was little time left to browse and borrow books.

*“We record the daily footfall and the numbers are high. But there is only a half hour time slot, and with the time it takes to move prisoners, realistically they only get 15 minutes browsing time in the library.” (Library Officer A)*

Frustration at this poor level of access to the library space was repeatedly voiced by prisoner participants:

*“...and you’re not given enough time. You really only have 5 or 10 minutes by the time you get down there. You’re in and out.” (Sean, focus group)*

*“Yeah, you need to know what you’re going for. You need to have it in your head before you go so that you have time when you get there to pick it up. There’s no time to properly browse the books on the shelves for what you might like.” (Andy, focus group)*

*“It’s not organised at all at the moment, it’s really hard to find things in there. Which isn’t great when you’re just in and out in 10-15 minutes.” (Deepak)*

*“Access is nay good. There’s just not enough staff to get everyone here...You could put your name down for a library visit in the morning and you still wouldn’t get to go. You know how it is in prisons. One thing happens in the halls and things are knocked off, staff won’t be able to bring you, it’s the domino effect.” (Steven)*

Levels of access also depended on which hall you belonged to and your daily education and work routine. For instance, interview participants working at the radio station and the gym were able to access the space regularly because of where they were located during the day:

*“I’m alright I know because I’m down here every day and I can go across if I really want to pick up a book.” (Steven)*

*“Because we’re working down in the gym, we’re actually able to access it every day if we really wanted. We’re cardholders so we can go anytime. We can just pop next door, it’s pretty easy for us. I know that’s not the case for everyone. It’s not so easy for other guys in my hall. I think it mostly depends on the staff – whether or not staff can bring you across when you want to go.”* (Kieran)

Mainstream prisoners who were involved in education classes during the day noted that they were often unable to access the library because visits would be scheduled during their time in class.

*“It depends. You don’t always get a chance. Especially me because I’m in education. I used to get to go more when I wasn’t in education, when I was just waiting to start education. There’s something funny about that isn’t there? Now I’m in education, I don’t get to access the library as much.”* (Michael)

*“Well I know I’m lucky enough, because I’m down in the hub anyway for Communications, so I can pretty much pop across to the library whenever I want to. But if I was doing something else in education, I might not even get to the library at all. You’re stuck between a rock and a hard place in that sense. Movement with staff is a big issue – there’s definitely not enough access to the library for everyone. It’s a numbers game, the same as everything in here.”* (John)

The most noted disparity was the different levels of access granted to mainstream prisoners and E-Hall prisoners. The separation of E-Hall prisoners and their distinct daily schedule meant that they were able to access the library more frequently than most mainstream prisoners, which was clearly a point of contention for the latter.

*“My hall gets quite good access, yeah we get a fair crack at the whip. We maybe get there 2-4 times a week. I don’t know if it’s changed but when I was in here 4 or 5 years ago, I was in a different hall, and I remember having to ask for the library over and over. There was pretty much no access.”* (David, E-Hall)

*“Yeah! The hall with the monsters – they get to come to the library sometimes three times a day. They’re the only hall in here with an actual scheduled working day. Boys in my hall get nothing, and they get everything. We can’t get jobs. These type of things get to us.” (Joe)*

*“And it’s the sex offenders who get to use it all the time and get to actually access the library, when others who want to can’t.” (Steven)*

The excerpt below offers a description of the physical library space, based on an observation during the early stages of fieldwork:

*When we reach the Communications Hub, we first have to walk through two locked doors – the second of which has large metal bars and is reminiscent of a prison cell door. The radio station is run from a room on the left, while the library is in a smaller room on the right. The staff tell me that the space isn’t big enough, but that Barlinnie is potentially closing and being replaced by a “superjail” so realistically the library space “probably won’t change now.” The room is filled with black shelving displaying library stock and there is a desk in the corner where two passmen sit to process books and carry out circulation duties. There is little room to move between shelves and no space for library users to sit and read. I am shown a display on the wall about a scheme called Inside Outside Libraries. This is run alongside Glasgow Life, and details the services available in public libraries – I am told prisoners are given a library card on release and are automatically signed up to use all of Glasgow’s 33 libraries. We only spend five minutes in the library space before walking across to the staff room, which is located in the radio station area. (Field notes, 23 October 2019)*

This reflection evidences that the library space was primarily used for borrowing resources and little else. Discussions with prisoner participants affirmed this and showed a desire for a larger library space, where they could spend longer time browsing books, reading and working.

*“I’d make sure we had longer sessions in the library, so you go and sit there. The library I liked most was Edinburgh as you could sit in it, just like a normal library really.” (David)*

*“I’ve been in [prison] libraries much bigger than here, with more books and computers and chairs and things so you can actually sit in the library for a bit and read or work. You can’t do that there – it’s just in and out once you’ve found something to borrow.” (Steven)*

Further frustrations, needs and hopes for change are noted in the thematic findings presented in this chapter which help to present a fuller picture of the library service at Barlinnie.

#### 6.8 Relationship between library services and education provision

Following a week of observations and interviews with staff and prisoners in the Communications Hub, the majority of the second week was spent observing classes and interviewing staff and students in the education department. This area was located a few buildings down from the Communications Hub and due to the restrictions of movement within the prison and lack of staff availability, it was not possible to simply move between the two areas at will. The education department had recently been refurbished and was more modern and colourful than most areas in the prison. The walls were decorated with prisoner artwork, which promoted the various creative learning projects taking place in education classes. Six classrooms were located at either side of a long corridor, as well as a staffroom and a desk close to the entrance where officers were stationed while prisoners were in class. As education provision is entirely outsourced to Fife College, this department is run completely separately from the library service. The level of disconnect between the library and education department was evident from the first day of fieldwork, and confirmed during both staff and prisoner interviews.



When asked about the relationship between education and library services, there was a general agreement that they were two separate entities:

*“From what I see, they are quite separate here.” (Ahmed)*

*“It’s totally separate. It’s not linked with education at all.” (Deepak)*

*“I do see the library as being part of education, or at least it should be. It’s important for people to get that opportunity – to use the library as a means of education. But in here there’s a definite disconnect. For example, we were learning about Animal Farm in class and I asked the library if we could get it in but they said ‘no, we don’t have the budget for that.’ I ended up ordering a copy of that for myself too. So I guess you can see the disconnect there, can’t you?” (Kurt)*

The topic also sparked an interesting exchange during the focus group, both between prisoners and the education staff member present:

Researcher: *“Let’s talk about the link with education. Do you see the library as being part of education provision here, or is it something completely separate?”*

Andy: *“That’s interesting, that’d be a good idea wouldn’t it? To have the library more part of the education building? It’s nay like that now, no they’d be considered pretty separate. Cos it’s over there, in the Communications Hub.”*

Matty: *“Yeah, I’d definitely consider it to be separate as well.”*

Sean [directed at tutor]: *“Could we not go over as part of our class sometime?”*

Reading class tutor: *“I would like to have a better relationship with the library. We have our own little unofficial libraries in each class – which are really books we take from the library. We did try before to bring people over to the library, a*

*long time ago, to bring them over classroom by classroom. But with security and time and everything, it really wasn't sustainable. Lack of staffing is a big issue."*

It also became evident that many of the programmes and events commonly associated with a prison library service, such as reading groups or author visits, were run by the education department and not the library. This meant that events were only attended by prisoners already signed up for education classes to the exclusion of others in the prison.

*"We've had some authors in too, but that's been through education. I've never seen authors in the library. Only here in education." (Sean, focus group)*

*"I don't think I've ever heard of authors coming in with the library, or at least I haven't been given a chance to go. But then we probably wouldn't be able to go along cos we can't mix." (Roddy, focus group)*

*"I'm not part of anything here. I heard they started doing book clubs here – on a Thursday or Friday I think, but I can't get to that. I don't think that's through the library though, that's education." (Kurt)*

One staff member admitted that they didn't *"really know much about the library here"* but that it would be good to have a stronger relationship with the library:

*"I definitely think there should be a bit more of a link. We could probably make better use of it, it's just hard with location and trying to get access to places at particular times. We each have a selection of books in our classrooms, most of which we've taken from the library – well I have anyway! One of our teachers, the communications teacher, he's based over there. So I guess that's some sort of a link. But no, it could definitely be better." (Tutor A)*

Although most prisoners agreed that a stronger link with the library would be beneficial, one participant recognised one of the potential challenges of forming strong links between library and education services:

*“That’s something to be careful about. If the college was too involved there might end up being contractual issues and you don’t want education totally running it, because then it becomes only about education, doesn’t it? But I do think education could be doing more to get people involved with library stuff somehow.”* (David)

There is clearly little liaison between the library and education department at Barlinnie. While it is important to ensure that a library does not become *“only about education”*, both staff and prisoners identified potential benefits of the two services working more closely together. Having set the context for library and education provision at Barlinnie, the remainder of the chapter will consider in more detail the experiences of prisoners through a thematic analysis of interview, focus group and observation data.

## 6.9 Information and communication

*“Incarcerated people face significant information poverty, both because of limited access to information resources and because incarceration itself produces information needs that cannot be easily met.”* (Drabinski and Rabina, 2015, p.42)

The term *information poverty* is used within the library and information field to describe groups of people *“who either lack access to information itself or to the digital tools that provide access to information”* (ibid., p.43). As a place where internet access is generally prohibited, where physical information resources are often restricted by low budgets and poor staffing levels, and where security concerns can lead to the censorship of reading materials, the prison is unequivocally identified as an

information poor environment. The diversity of the prison population also results in information needs which are more complex and often more critical than that of the general population. In its guidelines on library services to people in prison, IFLA recognises that, “An incarcerated person has not relinquished the right to learn and to access information, and the prison library should offer materials and services comparable to community libraries in the ‘free’ world” (Lehmann and Locke, 2005, p.4). Participants in this current study make clear that the prison context invariably prevents access to information services comparable to those in the free world, painting a particularly bleak picture of information access at Barlinnie. It is helpful to understand the context for their frustrations before considering existing information needs and how these may be addressed.

#### 6.9.1 Information poor environment

There was a consensus among prisoner participants that communication levels and access to information across the prison was poor:

*“You don’t find out about anything in here...I’ve been here 5 months and I’ve only just found out I can order coloured pencils and a shaver. Like they throw you in and tell you nothing – they should give you some sort of information booklet or something. I didn’t get any induction to the jail. I just got thrown in and left to it. You don’t get told about anything. Well, they’d open your door and tell you it’s time to eat.” (Michael)*

*“You can’t find anything out in here. Anything you do find out, you find out from other inmates. Or you find out afterwards...you do something and get punished and they only tell you after it happens, but how was I supposed to know when no one tells you anything? Communication in here – across the whole jail – it’s a bit of a joke if I’m honest.” (Dean)*

Lack of timely communication and access to information was not only evident through these explicit statements, but also in the confusion which existed around certain

prison policies and procedures. When asked if they ever ordered their own books from outside, most participants believed that this was not permitted at Barlinnie:

*“I got told you’re not allowed books. There’s ones that aren’t in the library that I’d wanna get but I was told we weren’t allowed. It probably sounds daft, but it’s not simple to find anything out in here.”* (Michael)

*“You’re not allowed to get books sent in as far as I know.”* (Kieran)

*“And you can’t get books in because they’re worried about drugs. You know, when people line the book with the stuff they use for drugs – like cockroach killer, and nail polish acetone and all that, they can line the books with it, so now we’re not allowed them in.”* (Dean)

These comments contradict the experiences noted by other prisoners, who do order their own books or have family members who send books to them. During the observation of the induction class, one participant explained the process of ordering books to the student sitting beside him. An interview participant also noted how he found out about the book ordering process from another prisoner:

*“People don’t know that you can order your own books. One of the guys, he orders books, so I found out from him. And when they ended that thing, you know where you could suddenly order books again, no one knew.”* (David)

Interview participants were also asked about the existence of reading groups or author visits at Barlinnie and if they had attended such events. Both education and library staff members mentioned a reading group run by the education department and author visits which take place once or twice a year, but prisoner participants showed little knowledge of these events.

*“Nope, I’ve never heard anything about that – like I say, you don’t get told anything in here. I wouldn’t hear about anything like that. I don’t know who gets told these things.” (Michael)*

*“I’ve heard whispers of author events but that was nearly a year ago and I was just finding my feet then so I didn’t get along to anything. I haven’t heard anything more about that.” (Kurt)*

A similar ignorance was apparent when participants were asked about their familiarity with the Inside Outside scheme run by the Mitchell Library:

*“No I haven’t heard about that, but I thought maybe you’d get a library card when you leave.” (Kieran)*

*“Bullshit! I mean, sorry, I’m not saying it’s bullshit that it happens, just that we’ve no idea that it happens.” (David)*

*“I figured there was something going on with the Mitchell Library because I’ve seen their stamps inside the books, so I figured they must donate some books. But no, I don’t know the Inside Outside thing.” (Michael)*

Participants recognised that part of the reason for not having heard about these events and schemes was their limited access to the library space. As each visit lasted only approximately 15 minutes, library users noted that there was little time to find out any of this information. There was simply time for browsing books or DVDs and leaving again.

*“No, I haven’t heard about that. I don’t think I’ve seen that on the wall. We’re only in the library for about 5 minutes at a time so I probably just don’t take it in.” (Kurt)*

*“We don’t get taught any of that or hear about it – at least I haven’t. It’s probably because we’re just in and out of there.” (Sean, focus group)*

*“And you don’t get much time at the library here. There’s no time to find stuff out. You’re there and then you leave. In some prisons you might even spend an hour in the library. There could be a couple of computers and you’d have leaflets and information on things and you could find stuff out. In here, you can find nothing out. It’s the worst prison I’ve been in for that.” (David)*

The censorship of books was also noted as a barrier to accessing the information requested by prisoners. Kurt expressed frustration about the long process of being granted access to a book he initially requested through the library, but eventually ordered himself:

*“I mean, listen to this. I ordered a book about the Glorious Revolution, and they asked me what it was about, and then I got told no – I couldn’t have it – it was religious, it was sectarian. It’s a history book! A history of how Home Rule was brought about. So I ordered it myself through Amazon. Then it arrived and security asked me again what it was about, and they wouldn’t let me have it. But I wrote a complaint and I got it back eventually. It’s educational! It’s history isn’t it, and I really like to read about history.” (Kurt)*

Kurt later referred to a different book which his sister bought on Amazon and sent to him. He was again denied access to this book, as it was a hardcover. *“I mean I know it’s because they’re afraid of drugs coming in, but I mean, it was coming straight from Amazon.”*

These frustrations and examples offered by participants make clear some of the challenges presented by the prison environment when trying to access information, both in the library and elsewhere in the prison. The following discussion will explore the diverse information needs expressed by these participants and ways in which they overcome existing barriers to address these needs.

### 6.9.2 Information needs

A recent study by Canning and Buchanan (2018) explored the information needs and behaviours of prisoners held at a high security prison in Scotland. They categorised their primary information needs as being related to “education, health, prison routines, legal, finance, housing and employment” (p.421). These categories mirror the needs expressed by participants at Barlinnie. As six of the interviews and the focus group were conducted with prisoners participating in education programmes, they were perhaps most vocal about the lack of access to educational resources, both in the library and in the education department. They complained about the fact that the library had such a poor selection of books and they often had to order their own books in order to study or pursue educational interests:

*“Can I be honest? The library is absolutely horrendous. There’s nothing there...If I’m in here to pass time, I want to spend that time doing something productive – I want to study something. I’m interested in accountancy and law, but there’s no books at all on that.” (Deepak)*

*“The library’s not helpful at all, not with books like that. I had to buy these myself, and some of them are really expensive. I’ve spent £60/£70 on some books. In here, the library’s really limited...You can fill out suggestion slips, but you never see them. Never in the 20 years I’ve been inside have I heard of people actually getting the books they request. You just don’t see it.” (David)*

The challenge of pursuing educational goals and accessing reading material was compounded by a lack of access to the internet and IT resources:

*“The library should be bigger, and it should have more learning resources. Like computers. There are nay computers in the library now.” (John)*

*“There’s not much access to IT stuff here. It’s obviously really limited. But I’ve been able to teach myself programming even through reading.” (David)*



*“It’d be great to have kindles in prison, or some kind of device you can read books on, that obviously worked on a prison intranet so you couldn’t get online. You’d have easy access to more books. But I can’t see it happening in here any time soon.” (Andy, focus group)*

This issue of restricted online access is not unique to Barlinnie, but is a challenge for the whole prison estate in Scotland and in prisons generally. When discussing the need to access information online, Stakeholder A noted:

*“There is no access at all across the prison estate...I totally support it, it’s just trying to convince an executive group to do it. We do have a state of the art intranet though, and Fife College have a full time worker who goes around different estates to keep that updated. There is something called iLearn, which is really a stripped down version of Moodle. They try to make it as realistic experience as they can, without having access to the internet. I think it’s probably as good as it can be without having that online access.”*  
(Stakeholder A)

Outside of educational pursuits, participants referred to the need to access reliable health information. One prisoner offered an example of writing to his sister to find out more about the medicine he is given in prison:

*“We have a thing where we can email family members. I’m still in contact with my sister so I ask her and she finds out stuff for me. The latest thing I’ve asked her about is drugs – I mean the drugs they’ve put me on in here, I want to know more about them. So she’ll find out for me.” (Kurt)*

Another participant spoke openly about his struggles with mental health, and talked of the support offered by his social worker. He also pinpointed the newspaper available in the library – *Inside Times* – as a source of information about support for mental health.

*“Being in here has depressed the life out of me – I really hate it. You can see why people top themselves – someone did it the other week in here. It’s awful....I find things out in [Inside Times]. They have stories about what’s going on in other prisons and information about who to talk to or write to about things. Like things related to mental health...I’m not crazy like, but I do have issues with mental health and depression – sometimes that paper is how I find out about things.” (Dean)*

Those working at the radio station recognised mental health to be one of the biggest challenges facing people in prison and discussed their efforts to distribute information on the resources available to support mental health and wellbeing in prison.

*“We’re really making a push with mental health stuff. Sending out information about who people can talk to and how to fill in the right forms and things like that, ‘cause things are in meltdown when it comes to mental health. And we have that Fun Day coming up - there’ll be a mental health stall at that too. People can come and chat to the main source and find out the right answers to things from the people at that stall.” (Joe)*

At the time of fieldwork being carried out, some of the project-themed learning was also centred around mental health and wellbeing. These projects were linked with the upcoming ban on smoking in Scotland’s prisons. Deepak shared about the research he was conducting for an article on the smoking ban for the Barlinnie magazine. He too noted that *“mental health is the topic of the moment.”*

Discussions about prisoners’ use of both college and public libraries on the outside, as well as references made to libraries in other prisons, provided further insights into their information needs and behaviours. These comments underlined again the lack of information resources available in the library at Barlinnie and affirm the inconsistent level of services across institutions. Public libraries were praised for their access to

computers and to free WIFI, which participants had used to carry out research, to access emails and to search for jobs.

*“I actually used libraries to send faxes and emails. I’ll be visiting the Mitchell library when I get out, especially for the free WIFI. You really can’t do anything without WIFI. Social security forms, job searching - you need WIFI to do that. So the library is great for things like that.”* (Joe)

*“I used the Mitchell Library when I had no access to a computer so I could use the PCs in there.”* (David)

Two participants discussed their experiences of homelessness prior to incarceration and how public libraries enabled them to access online information and emails which would have been otherwise unavailable to them. Ahmed’s experience of using libraries outside offered a poignant example of the disadvantages that come with being cut off from the internet in prison:

*“I used libraries outside to use the internet. I am from Somalia. It is a war torn country and I used the internet in the library to find out about Somalia. Every day from Monday to Friday, I went to find out the news about my country. But you can’t find that kind of information out here, because there’s no internet.”*  
(Ahmed)

There is not enough scope in this current study for an in-depth investigation into the information needs and behaviours of prisoners, but the issues discussed here offer a useful insight into the needs of prisoners at Barlinnie and their frustration at the lack of access to information which adequately meets these needs.

### 6.9.3 Ways of accessing information

Despite the key role of a library as a gateway to information, it soon became clear that this was not generally the perception of the library at Barlinnie. Aside from borrowing

books for recreational purposes, there were only two explicit references made about using the library to access information. The first was by a member of the radio working party, who sometimes used the books in the library to find information for radio shows:

*“Like if we do a chat show. We might do a chat show on football or something like that, and we’d get answers from books in the library, and the library staff help us find that.”* (Joe)

The second reference was that of Dean using the newspaper in the library to find information about mental health resources and support (section 6.9.2). Participants spoke more frequently about finding out information from other prisoners or staff members and occasionally from family members or support workers. The radio was also noted as a source of information, as were the noticeboards located in each hall. Participants were dubious however about the usefulness of these noticeboards:

*“Well there are noticeboards in each hall, but you usually hear things from other people before you find out things that way. You don’t really have much access to go down and see the noticeboards, especially if you’re out working all day. If you don’t have a job, you can make requests in the morning – like if you want to go the library or maybe the gym that day, or if you want to use the shower – so if you’re making your requests you might have time to stop and look at the noticeboards but I’m not sure if anyone really pays much attention to it. And to be honest I noticed something from 2011 on there the other day so I’m not sure how often they’re updated.”* (Kieran)

*“I don’t think anything was put up on any noticeboards. Though who really takes in what’s up on the noticeboard?”* (David)

Discussions with other people in the prison seemed to be the main way of finding out information. It has already been noted that prisoners found out about the book ordering process through conversations with other prisoners. One prisoner also

recounted how he found out about employment possibilities with the radio station through a conversation with a friend. Prison staff were also noted as a source of information, although participants differed on their opinions of the willingness of staff to communicate effectively with prisoners. For Deepak, it was a case of not being able to rely on staff to provide you with answers:

*“You just gotta ask questions or you don’t find out anything. I’d ask a staff member about something and they’d ask someone else but half the time you wouldn’t hear back about anything.” (Deepak)*

Those of the interview participants working at the radio station recognised the poor standard of communication in the prison and saw their role as getting information out to those who may not otherwise be able to access it.

*“What we’re really doing is getting information out to people. Some of the information that’s maybe put on posters or written in places, people might not read it or might not be able to understand it or something, so we’re getting information out especially to people who can’t read.” (Joe)*

*“The best thing is really getting information across to people – you know sometimes people are locked up for 23 hours.” (Steven)*

The very fact that the radio station sits alongside the library in the ‘Communications Hub’ evidences its role in communicating information to people. One participant, currently working as a passman in the gym, shared how he signed up for a forklift course because he heard about it on the prison radio. Others were not so positive about the impact of the radio:

*“Let me tell you, no one listens to that radio station. To listen to it, you need to turn to a certain channel on your TV. You actually have to swap leads in the TV in your cell to get it sometimes, it’s complicated. I’d say about 10% of the prison listens to it.” (David)*

Along with discussing their information needs and behaviours and the experiences of education and library provision, each participant was asked what changes they would make if they were put in charge of the library. Answers to this question again pointed to the fact that they lived in an information poor environment and desired more access both to physical and online information resources. Along with a wider variety of books, DVDs and CDs, participants expressed a need for better IT and computer access and some level of internet or intranet access. They also noted that they would allocate more time to library visits so they would be able to find the information they sought without being rushed back to their halls. One participant reflected on an experience he had at a different prison:

*“In Perth, the library was quite good. They do this thing with Dundee Uni, where the Law students come in and talk to prisoners, and help them find information and stuff, and do a bit of research with people. Libraries could do more things like that.” (David)*

The HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) asserts that prisoners should be able to “take an active role in influencing decisions about services, routines and facilities in the prison” (HMI Prisons, 2017, p.21). All participants in this study were eager to share their opinions and offer ideas for a successful library service. The information needs expressed in this section and the suggested ideas for change made by prisoners throughout this study could help to influence future decisions made about library service provision at Barlinnie. Findings of this study will be summarised and provided to relevant stakeholders in the Scottish Prison Service, which will allow this feedback to be heard.

#### 6.10 Coping with the prison environment

Despite aiming to rehabilitate individuals, it is clear that the prison environment is far from ideal in supporting change and identity transformation. One of the main barriers to change is “the boredom and inactivity of a stagnant regime” (Liebling, 1999, p.173).

A study by Nurse et al. (2003, p.480) on the impact of the prison environment on mental health found that “long periods of isolation with little mental stimulus contributed to poor mental health and led to intense feelings of anger, frustration, and anxiety.” The boredom associated with a prison sentence can have severely damaging effects on an already vulnerable population, often leading to bullying, violence or drug use as potential release from boredom. It is not enough to simply offer activities to pass the time during incarceration. These activities must hold meaning or purpose for the lived experiences of prisoners, as evidenced by the focus on “purposeful activity” in prison planning, policies and inspection reports. With this understanding in mind, the Scottish Prison Service undertook a *Review of Purposeful Activity* across the prison estate in 2014 and broadened their definition of purposeful activity:

“Purposeful activity includes any activity or constructive interaction which promotes citizenship; develops learning and employability skills; builds life skills and resilience; addresses well-being; and motivates personal engagement with both prison and community based services.” (SPS, 2014, p.8)

This category explores what is learned from prisoners about their general experiences of incarceration. It focuses specifically on the issue of boredom and the lack of stimulation in prison and considers various ways in which prisoners spend their time in order to combat the effects of a monotonous regime. The final sub-category explores how library services can contribute to purposeful activity, through the provision of resources which help pass time and alleviate boredom during incarceration.

#### 6.10.1 Boredom and lack of stimulation

Boredom is a well-known feature of everyday life in prison and it was no surprise that the monotony of the daily prison regime was a feature of prisoners’ experiences documented in interviews. Participants spoke about the long periods of time spent in their cells, particularly at the weekends:

*"[Visiting the library] gets me out of the cell I guess. You know we're pretty much in our cells 23 hours a day here?" (Kurt)*

*"It'd be good if we could do stuff at the weekends. We only get to lie in until 9, but why, what's the point? We're not getting up for anything? We don't do anything the rest of the day." (Dean)*

As noted, participants in this case study were either involved in education classes or employed at the radio station or gym, meaning that there were participating in some kind of "purposeful activity" for at least part of the day. Some spoke positively about the range of subject choices on offer, ranging from basic literacy classes to more advanced classes and Higher Education courses. Others referred to being bored of the limited and basic level of education and compared it to the wider range of courses they heard were available in other prisons. They noted the kind of courses they would like to do if given the opportunity:

*"I feel like in education, there's not much choice for stuff beyond basic literacy and numeracy. I'd definitely want to do something in the college if I could. But something with music." (Steven)*

*"And all the courses in here are crap. My mates in England, they're doing bricklaying and things that are a bit different, that I'd actually want to spend my time doing. But there's not much choice to do stuff here." (Dean)*

*"There's no full-time education here now you know. I think it's worse since Fife took over – I've had no education at all. I know I'm down for Communication here but it isn't a full module. I mean we could do whole courses in one year with the amount of time we have. But it isn't happening." (John)*

If these participants spoke about the lack of choice and stimulation in prison, it is likely that those not engaging in work or education programmes were faced with even more of a monotonous regime. Joe (a member of the radio station working party) referred



to others who were in that position. He also notes that an unpredictable prison regime can prevent prisoners from accessing education or jobs during the day:

*“I’m probably one of the lucky ones. There’s guys sitting about in cells because there’s no jobs. Have you been in the halls and seen what it’s like? The hall manager can make it a tough day. Once someone is out of line everything falls to fuck. You might not get to education then or somewhere else you’re meant to be.”* (Joe)

#### 6.10.2 Passing time

Participants discussed a number of ways in which they chose to pass the time whilst incarcerated. Those who were interviewed in the education department seemed to share the mindset voiced by Michael: *“if you’re stuck in jail, you may as well do something to educate yourself.”* As an E-Hall prisoner, Kurt was able to attend classes every day and added that he would continue to study in his hall in the evenings. He also stated, *“I figure if they’re gonna keep me in here, I’m gonna educate myself.”* Deepak also noted the variety of classes he took, including art and creative projects such as contributing to the prison’s magazine. *“If I’m in here to pass time, I want to spend that time doing something productive, I want to study something.”* For John, education was a way of escape:

*“I came to education to escape. People go to the gym, I go to education. You’re learning things you know, and giving something back.”* (John)

David also spoke of the various courses he has been able to complete during his time in prison. Having been expelled from school when he was younger, he has now completed both basic and more advanced courses at Barlinnie:

*“I’ve spent all of my adult life in prison, so my education has happened here. I didn’t complete school, I got expelled. But I’ve done a few courses in prison. I did all the basic Level 1 and Level 2 stuff but I got bored of that. I’ve even done a*

*couple of OU courses. I buy books myself and I study myself. I'm in second year degree level now of Health and Social Care, and I've also done higher level stuff in Community Education."* (David)

Two participants reflected on the impact of art and drawing on their time in prison. Dean mentioned that he always enjoyed drawing, but gave it up after school. He noted that he now has time to do more of it, and that it helps him cope with prison life:

*"Art helps me the most in here. When I'm there for that couple of hours I feel at peace with myself. It's a bit of freedom. And the only thing I can make a choice about. Anything else you're told what to do and when to do it – when to eat, when to shower, when to leave your cell and when to go back. I hate it."* (Dean)

Michael also spoke of art as a way to pass the time:

*"It's hard to say what I'm most interested in. I like Modern Studies and I like Art – art takes your mind off being in jail. I do a lot of it in my cell as well to pass the time, instead of watching TV."* (Michael)

Another frequently mentioned method of relaxation was music, whether that meant simply listening to music on the prison radio or CDs borrowed from the library, or playing music with others in the prison. Steven talked about playing his guitar with other cellmates, stating that *"playing the guitar relaxes me."* Kurt recognised that *"a lot of people use music to cope with things in here. Yeah, music is definitely one of the best things [offered by the library] because it's a coping mechanism."*

Interview participants also spoke of reading as a way of passing the time and as a temporary means of escape from the prison environment:

*"I often read to pass the time."* (Kurt)

*"It offers a bit of escape. When you're locked up, a book can take you out of the walls. If only for a bit, you know."* (Steven)

*“The books I’ve been reading help me through. Textbooks can really only help you with so much. But other books can help you with loads of things, personal skills, things like that. It’s an escape route. A way to deal with your sentence. It can take you right out of the walls without taking substances or narcotics. And it gives you a bit of your brain back. That’s what I think anyway.”* (John)

As the focus group was conducted with students in a Higher Reading class, they were keen to discuss their experiences of reading in prison and their views of different literacy genres. The following excerpt of conversation from the focus group offers an insight into the reading experiences of this group:

Marcus: *“You know, I didn’t read at all outside... [So what made you start reading here?] My [cellmate] had a book that interested me. And from that my interests just expanded. I like science-fiction books here.”*

Roddy: *“Yeah my reading tastes are totally different from when I came in. I used to love classic novels, but since coming in here I read a lot more crime novels. Though I’m really into Russian classics at the moment too. I’m reading Dostoevsky now.”*

Andy: *“I’m big into fantasy and science fiction, that would be my favourite genre.”*

Even those who admitted not being avid readers acknowledged that for others it was a way of coping and escape:

*“I know other people use [the library] for books as well, again probably for passing time. Lots of people become readers when they’re stuck in here for a while.”* (Kieran)

*“A chance to get your head in a book and pass time. I know a lot of people do enjoy reading and it’s their way to escape for a bit. I mean there’s only so much daytime TV you can watch.” (Michael)*

Not only was reading noted as a means of escape, but also as a way of stimulating the brain in an otherwise mundane environment. David’s comment is a reminder of the boredom caused by the monotony of prison life:

*“There’s a total lack of stimulation in prison. Reading stimulates my brain. A lot of the time I choose to read things I don’t understand just to get my juices flowing. I read the reviews in the Observer – you know like reviews on books and the theatre and stuff? I wouldn’t even say I really like watching theatre but I still like reading the reviews for ideas.” (David)*

### 6.10.3 Library resources

The SPS Review of Purposeful Activity recognised the library to be an important contributor to purposeful activity in prison, noting the range of services provided by libraries such as “reading groups, book groups, discussion groups, visiting authors, chess clubs, assisted reading groups and creative writing classes” (SPS, 2014, p.62). Stakeholder A also discussed similar initiatives happening in libraries across Scotland’s prison estate, before noting that many of these things were unfortunately not currently offered at Barlinnie. Prisoner participants in this study reminisced about experiencing these services in other prisons, or when they used to have access to such services at Barlinnie:

*“We used to have [reading groups] – but they were only for the mainstream prisoners. Now I think someone comes in on a Monday but I can’t get to it.” (Andy, focus group)*

*“I used to do Storybook Dads as well when they were a bit younger and I was inside. But I don’t know if you can do that here anymore...There’s been a few*

*different author visits, which you can usually get to if you put your name down. We've had creative weeks too with poets, authors, workshops and a comedy club. That's when I was in a few years ago. But the library's changed a bit, I don't think there's as much of that going on as there used to be."* (John)

*"It's a really small library isn't it? It used to be a lot bigger with more books and more going on – it was in that rec area back there. And now it's changed to here. It's the worst one I've been in...well definitely the smallest. In the newer prisons, some of the libraries are actually decent."* (Steven)

Others noted that they would like to have the opportunity to take part in these kind of informal learning or literacy activities. When asked what changes he would make to the library, Andy stated that he would *"start running a book group."* David's response was to be able to attend author visits:

*"Author visits! I'd love to be a part of something like that. But at the minute nothing like that is available for us. Maybe for the mainstream prisoners, but not for us."* (David)

The main thing the library contributed was offering resources to pass the time, as noted when participants were asked about the best aspect of the current library service:

*"Simple, books to borrow."* (Matty, focus group)

*"Yep, books to pass the time."* (Andy, focus group)

*"A chance to get your head in a book and pass the time."* (Michael)

*"Most people use it for DVDs. At the weekend you're locked up from 4pm, so watching DVDs is a good way to pass the time."* (Kieran)

## 6.11 Generating social capital

As discussed in Section 2.5, social capital has been identified as an important contributing factor to desistance (Farrall, 2004; McNeill, 2006) and so prisons must seek to provide opportunities for people to access and build social capital during and after incarceration. The conceptual model presented in Chapter Two suggests some of the ways in which prison libraries can help to build social capital, including the provision of peer learning programmes and family literacy schemes. At the time of this case study, such services were not available in Barlinnie. Aside from the ways that reading had helped to broaden horizons, the ways in which the library service contributed to social capital appeared to be quite limited. Analysis of interview data did however reveal some of the ways in which social capital was currently accessed in Barlinnie, as well as highlighting a range of prisoner needs which could potentially be addressed by a more efficient library service. This theme explores the informal networks which exist both within and outside the prison, as well as considering opportunities for agency during incarceration and the level of trust and reliability observed at Barlinnie. The findings are helpful in identifying prisoner needs and avenues for accessing social capital which may be facilitated by a broader range of library services.

### 6.11.1 Informal networks

There were evident opportunities for positive socialisation experiences in both the education department and Communications Hub:

*“I’ve known some of them even before prison you know! It’s good to mix I guess – we have all different Halls working together in that room.” (Joe)*

*“I didn’t know any of them before coming down here. I’ve been invited into the fold! It’s good to mix a bit with the others. You’ve seen the kind of environment we have down here – it’s pretty good. We can have our off days but in general it’s a pretty good place to be.” (Steven)*

There appeared to be a genuine concern for the wellbeing of other prisoners, perhaps most evident when the radio workers discussed the radio as a means of communicating information to others in prison and particularly information related to mental health. In discussing what they would change about the library, prisoners thought not only about what would benefit them but what would benefit others in the prison. Many who were not even users of the library noted that it would be good to have more resources for people, including more resources for ESOL prisoners. One participant referred to his experience of peer mentoring in another prison and how he would like to see that take place in Barlinnie:

*“I’d try to do more for people with lower literacy levels as well. In Glenochil I was a peer tutor. Something like that would be great in the library.”* (David)

According to library staff, this was an initiative that used to run in Barlinnie until funding was pulled:

*“This is a shame because they were actually using it a good bit in Barlinnie. They tried to keep it going using the material left by the Shannon Trust but it just didn’t work. Occasionally you’d get a guy asking for the material to use with his cell mate so we support that, but it’s very rare that it happens.”* (Library Officer A)

There was also evidence of accessing personal development and employment opportunities through the social connections fostered in prison. One prisoner participated in a forklifting course after hearing about it on the prison radio, and another secured his position at the radio station after learning about it from a friend:

*“I actually heard about it through a pal in my guitar class. I play guitar. You don’t get jobs when you’re on remand, so I hadn’t heard about it. I was like, ‘you’re doing what? Working on a radio?’ And he pointed me toward the channel so I could listen to it. I thought, yes this is something I’d wanna do. So I*

*asked him to put my name forward. And then when I wasn't on remand anymore I got a call and asked if I wanted to join."* (Steven)

Maintaining family relationships can be one of the most important ways of building social capital. Many of the interview participants referred to their "wee'uns" and the level of visiting access varied. One participant was from England but on remand in Barlinnie, so was not able to receive visits from his son. Some participants reminisced about bringing their children to public libraries, and were disappointed by the lack of family reading programmes available at Barlinnie. They spoke of similar programmes run at other prisons, or remembered when it used to be offered at Barlinnie. Others had never even heard of Storybook Dads.

*"And libraries are good for engaging with the wee'uns. I'd go about the different libraries with them, and help them to pick out books. I used to do Storybook Dads as well when they were a bit younger and I was inside. But I don't know if you can do that here anymore."* (John)

According to the Family Contact Officer, Storybook Dads used to happen at Barlinnie *"but it bombed."* They are currently planning to start a similar scheme called "Night time stories" where dads read a book onto a CD for their children, but she noted that this would be done in collaboration with the education department and not the library. This officer provided an example of the family literacy opportunities facilitated by the visiting centre:

*"Speaking of family literacy, let me show you what we did during the summer! [She walks into the office and returns with a poster of 'Dennis the Menace Book Challenge.'] This was a summer reading challenge, run alongside Glasgow Libraries. I think they do it every year. Kids are asked to read books as part of the challenge and this year they were all Dennis the Menace books - we joined a little late so we only got through three books, instead of 6, but it went really well. I think there was an event for them as well, you know for kids who had*



*done it, they got some sort of award in one of the public libraries, which will have been really great for them.” (Family Officer A)*

This family visiting centre had been recently refurbished, and it was clear that staff were eager to improve the opportunities for positive interactions between parents and children during visits. One interview participant referenced these positive changes:

*“But the visits and the way it’s changed is the best thing to have happened here. In the old visits hall, if one foot was put out of line you’d be called up on it. In the new visits hall, it’s all been done up, and wee’uns are allowed to run around. Last time my wee’un found a box of lego and starting running about and I just thought, ‘Oh no...’” (Joe)*

The prison also offered prisoners the opportunity to email family members, as referred to in section 6.6.2.

#### 6.11.2 Agency

Criminologists stress the importance of agency in the desistance process, of individuals taking control over their lives and making their own choices (Maruna, 2001). The prison environment, with its focus on control, security and surveillance, grossly inhibits opportunities for individual agency whilst incarcerated:

*“...you’re told what to do and when to do it – when to eat, when to shower, when to leave your cell and when to go back. I hate it.” (Dean)*

The above quotation poignantly reflects Sykes’ depiction of what he considered to be one the greatest pains of imprisonment, that of *loss of autonomy*. He explained that prisoners are confined *to* as well as *within* the prison and they are “subjected to a vast body of rules and commands which are designed to control [their] behaviour in minute detail” (1958, p.73). Without the freedom to make basic daily choices, it is difficult to imagine the possibility of taking control of the direction of one’s life in prison.

For some interview participants, taking part in educational activities suggested an expression of agency. They noted a range of educational classes to choose from and recognised how these learning experiences could be helpful once released from prison. The following exchange was a particularly interesting example of how education opened up opportunities for this individual:

*“You’re learning things you know, and giving something back. And because of education, now everything is different for me: what I think, my family situation, social circles. I would never have imagined the power that education could have.”*

[Can you tell me more about how it’s impacted your social circles?]

*“It’s ‘cause of the way I speak now. And the chances I’ve had. I’ve spoken at Edinburgh Fringe, I’ve toured with the theatre, I’ve won writing competitions. At the Fringe, I got to sit with members of the UN, the First Minister, and the Justice Secretary. I’ve been getting about through the power of education. When I was out I was getting peer support mentoring, and I got help from the Criminology department at Glasgow University. I went around talking to youngsters about my life and decisions and how they can make better ones!”*

(John)

The experience of working at the radio station also gave prisoners ownership of a project, as they were trusted by staff to come up with ideas and themes for the radio shows each week. Radio station members were also responsible for organising elements of a “Cash for Kids” charity fun day at the prison. Observation of a planning meeting for this event showed again how prisoners were trusted by staff and encouraged to lead and organise these activities. One member of the radio team later spoke about a specific member of staff who had made a lasting impact on him in setting up the radio:

*“It was a hard process to get this radio started. The last tutor was a real inspiration to me. She’s left now but I’ll never forget her. She pushed and pushed to get this radio up and running. I remember sitting in a classroom with pens and paper, just noting down ideas, and that was all we had.” (John)*

This kind of motivation and self-efficacy is an important feature of personal agency, helping individuals to believe in their ability to change and make good choices. The relationships built with prison staff are therefore of key importance in constructing social capital, as discussed in the final section.

### 6.11.3 Trust and reliability

Trust must exist in order for relationships to work, and so is integral to building social capital. Lafferty et al. (2016, p.2) recognise that in prison, “low levels of trust have been found to impede upon relationship development between inmates and staff, a barrier in the construction of social capital.” As part of their evidence-based approach to policy development, the SPS also recognise this and have taken on board what desistance literature states about the importance of trust and respect in staff-prisoner relationships. In their revised value proposition, one of the key areas they note to be effective in reducing reoffending is that of the relationships between workers and people in custody which should be “based on mutual respect and trust” (SPS, 2016, p.7).

This stance was echoed by Stakeholder A when discussing the relationship between education staff and prisoners:

*“And I would want to note that the most important thing is how we offer this education and how we work with people on a daily basis. It’s all to do with the philosophy in how we treat individuals.” (Stakeholder A)*

An education staff member reflected on the positive working environment she had witnessed at Barlinnie:

*“What I will say is the staff morale here is the best in any prison I’ve been in. The officers are great. I’d say they’re here to make sure we’re ok more than anything else. And they get on alright with the prisoners too. I think people hear ‘Barlinnie’ and have a pretty rough idea of the prison, but in reality there’s been a lot of changes and it’s a pretty good environment to work in. I’ve had very few issues, and from what I can tell the relationships with officers are quite positive. I’m sure that’s not always the case in the halls, I guess I can’t really speak for that. I can only really say what I see here in the education department and it’s better than other places I’ve worked.” (Tutor A)*

Prisoner participants had mixed opinions on staff relationships. Examples have already been shared of how certain education staff members encouraged and motivated prisoners, and many positive interactions between prisoners and prison officers were observed during the fieldwork period at Barlinnie. Some participants did not view staff rapport in such a positive light:

*“If I’m honest, the staff are no help. A lot of them have the mindset of ‘lock us up and throw the boot in us.’ They don’t care about us or education. Not everyone, but a lot of them think that way.” (Kurt)*

*“It probably sounds daft, but it’s not simply to find anything out in here. The staff aren’t interested in getting you books – they have their own job to do. And that’s fair enough.” (Michael)*

Steven pointed out the difference between interactions with staff in the halls and the more positive staff rapport which existed in the Communications Hub:

*“There’s a big difference between the officers in the halls and down here. I don’t know if that’s just [the officers] themselves. Or if it’s because it’s down here and everything’s a good bit different in the Communications Hub.” (Steven)*

This comment points to the differing kind of rapport that can be built in certain spaces within the prison. As seen in both Chapters Four and Five, the prison library is usually recognised as being a trusted space with reliable staff members, in contrast to experiences elsewhere in the prison. The provision of a bigger library space with the opportunity to participate in social learning activities might increase opportunities to build trust in this space at Barlinnie, both with staff members and among prisoners.

## 6.12 Summary of findings

This chapter has provided a detailed description of the library services provided at HMP Barlinnie, along with insights into wider library and education provision across the Scottish prison estate. It has discussed the level of liaison between library and education staff and how this relationship is viewed both by staff and prisoners. Findings of this case study revealed some of the information needs and behaviours of prisoners, the ways in which prisoners cope with the prison environment and their methods of passing time and alleviating boredom, as well as addressing the issue of social capital and how this is generated within the prison. In presenting these findings, this chapter has shown how the library currently supports the needs of prisoners and identifies ways in which the development of library services could help to address some unmet needs. The themes presented in this chapter will now be discussed in more detail alongside earlier findings and the conceptual framework presented in Chapter Two to see how research questions have been answered and what these findings mean for our understanding of the value of prison library services and the development of future prison library research.

## Chapter Seven: Scope and significance of research findings

### 7.1 Introduction

The previous three chapters presented findings of the empirical research carried out during this study, firstly exploring the professional experiences and perspectives of prison library staff across the UK and Ireland and then examining more closely the provision of library services within two distinct prison settings. This chapter synthesises these findings, considering them alongside the central aims of the study and furthering their interpretation by reflecting on relevant existing literature and theory. The chapter begins by re-stating the research questions and the central aims of the thesis. The remainder of the chapter is divided into two distinct sections, determined by the overarching research questions. This research project set out to explore engagement with prison library services through the lens of both educational and criminological theory and framed by a critical librarianship perspective, postulating that a thorough understanding of the social context in which library services are delivered would lead to a more accurate interpretation of their value and impact. The first part of this chapter addresses this claim by reflecting on how certain concepts of desistance research and informal learning theories have aided interpretation of the data collected in this study. The latter half of the chapter focuses more specifically on prisoners' experiences of informal learning, the extent of liaison between library and education staff at different prison sites, and the implications of this liaison for the overall learning experience of the prisoner.

### 7.2 Re-statement of research questions

This research project set out to examine how contemporary theories of desistance might provide a framework from which to better understand prisoners' experiences of the library, and in turn to explore ways in which library services could contribute to the wellbeing and desistance of people in prison. While this remained a focus throughout the study, the specific questions which came to underpin the inquiry were adapted

during each phase of data collection. When it became clear that the library played a significant role in the informal learning experiences of prisoners, the research sought to examine this further and to consider the level of collaboration between library services and education departments in prison. This resulted in two main strands of inquiry throughout the research:

- How might theories of desistance help us better understand the outcomes of engaging with prison library services?
- What role does the library play in the learning experiences of people in prison?

These separate questions are closely linked in nature, particularly when considering contemporary research on the links between prison education and desistance. However, until now prison library research has rarely been linked with either desistance literature or informal learning experiences in prison settings. With these main aims in mind, the research answers the following secondary questions:

- How have recent policy changes impacted upon the provision of prison library services in Northern Ireland and Scotland?
- How do staff members perceive the role and value of prison library services?
- How do prisoners perceive the role and value of prison library services?
- What informal learning opportunities are offered by the prison library?
- How does the relationship between the library and education department impact upon a prisoner's experience of learning?

These questions have been answered through a thorough exploration of existing relevant policy and strategy documents, alongside the collection of empirical data from policymakers, prison education staff, prison and public library staff and prisoners about their experiences of developing, delivering and engaging with library services.

### 7.3 Exploring the impact and value of prison library services

The following paragraphs address the first of the two overarching research questions. The section begins by underlining the need to find a valid and feasible way of evaluating and discussing the impact of prison libraries. Drawing on the findings presented in previous chapters, it considers the implications of prison libraries not traditionally having had to provide outcomes of their services, and the misconceptions which therefore exist about service provision. The section then considers potential approaches for capturing the value of library engagement. It re-iterates the view stated in earlier chapters that an interdisciplinary approach must be taken, as meanings and experiences associated with the library cannot be separated from the unique social context in which they take place. Sociological research on the experience of imprisonment is therefore crucial to understanding engagement with library services in this environment. It reflects on the conceptual framework presented in section 2.7, discussing its utility in interpreting the experiences recounted by prisoners and how this model could be adapted and used in future prison library research. The final discussion in this section focuses specifically on prisoners' engagement with the space of the library, drawing on research by Crewe et al. (2014, p.61) on the "emotional geography of prison life." It was decided that the multi-layered significance of the distinct nature of the library space evident at each stage of this study merited further exploration in this chapter.

#### 7.3.1 Lack of accountability and its implications

One of the first clear findings to emerge from this study was the shared frustration among library staff participants at the lack of appreciation or understanding of the range of services they provide. Participants spoke of existing misconceptions about what the library offers and the resulting low priority it is afforded in the prison regime. It should be noted that this is not the case for all prison sites. Participants H and I in the first phase of the study noted that a strong interest from the Governor had greatly impacted upon engagement with library services and increased their visibility within



the prison. This was especially true for Participant H, whose library was considered to be the hub of the education department. Those not fortunate enough to have this level of support from senior management struggled to promote the worth of their services. It was almost unanimously noted among library staff interview participants that they were not obligated to provide outcomes data or meet any key performance indicators set by the prison. One of the reasons for this lack of accountability appeared to be the dual management of prison libraries. Most libraries (with the exception of those based in private prisons) are run under a Service Level Agreement between the prison and the Public Library Authority, with each being responsible for certain aspects of the service. As a result, prison library staff can be left feeling like “*piggy in the middle*” (Participant J) with little sincere interest shown from either organisation. Some staff members, despite being under no obligation to do so, chose to collect statistics about library engagement or wrote reports describing library activities so as to have evidence of the services they provide. This proved to be beneficial for one staff member:

*“We choose to keep our own statistics – we’re never asked for anything. I write a report every year. We’re not asked for a report...we keep our own figures. And that’s obviously so we can support various things. So last year when they stopped the induction because it no longer fitted in to how they were doing things, and we then were able to produce figures to say that our borrowing numbers were down - our numbers of new borrowers were down - because of this action and that prisoners were not getting the opportunities they should have. That sort of fired into that.”* (Participant D)

One questionnaire respondent revealed a conflicting attitude toward this lack of accountability when she noted that “*outcomes are less measurable than say – education – and this gives us more freedom but less clout*” (Respondent 7). It removed a certain level of pressure from staff and they could be innovative in their service provision with little pushback from the prison. Participant D also noted that “*there are pros and cons to it, yes, it does give you a lot more individual freedom about things we’d like to do.*” This resulting lack of “*clout*” however often meant that the library

became isolated within the prison, was not always included in the prisoner induction process, and was overlooked in relevant policy discussions and reports. This was most notable in Coates' Review of Prison Education (2016b), which made no reference to the library at any point in the report. Two library staff participants voiced their disbelief at the absence of any mention of the library. This highlighted a more serious implication of a lack of accountability or outcomes research, and again points to the need for a valid way of demonstrating library impact.

The consequences of this lack of accountability were also observed during the period of case study research in Scotland. According to Stakeholder A, libraries are the only aspect of the Scottish prison service that *"haven't been accountable, that haven't had to show outcomes."* Coupled with a lack of standardised library provision policy, this resulted in an inconsistency of library provision across the prison estate, with some libraries offering very little access and insufficient resources. This was however acknowledged and addressed when library services were put under the remit of the Learning and Skills Department in 2014. Recognising the important role played by the library in the lives of prisoners, steps were taken by the Scottish Prison Service and the Scottish Library and Information Council to improve and standardise library provision across prisons. An audit of each prison library across Scotland taken in 2015 led to subsequent changes in service provision. An example of these changes were observed during a visit to HMP Castle Huntly, following the fieldwork period at Barlinnie. This prison library had received the lowest score in the initial audit and was described as *"a cupboard with little access"* (Stakeholder A), but had since been transformed into a large, modern and functioning library service adjoined to the education department (see section 6.6 for a fuller description of this transformation). This shows the changes that are possible when library services are taken seriously and evaluated as other prison-based services would be.

### 7.3.2 Demonstrating library impact

The need for further empirical research to demonstrate the value and impact of prison library services was proposed in earlier chapters and was noted as a major part of the rationale behind conducting the study. Staff frustrations voiced particularly in the first phase of the study affirmed the need for this kind of research and unveiled the negative implications of this lack of evidence and lack of understanding about the role and value of library services. These early findings prompted further reflection on the most appropriate and feasible way of building a valid and reliable body of evidence which effectively captures the value of library services. This study deemed it important to take a qualitative approach to demonstrating this value. While quantitative data can be useful to an extent, any meaningful demonstration of a library service must move beyond statistics. In theorising about impact studies of public library services, Usherwood (2002, p.119) notes that “such figures tend only to deal with inputs and outputs and...there is a danger of only measuring what is measurable, and missing what is important about the library service.” This was particularly evident in the second case study. Library staff at Barlinnie proudly exhibited the statistics they kept of how many prisoners visited the library each day. Although these numbers seemed impressive, the case study research revealed that these visits only lasted approximately 15 minutes, and prisoners were highly frustrated at the lack of meaningful access they had to the library space. Qualitative research was required to unpack the meaning behind these statistics. Similarly, a recent survey taken by the CILIP Prison Libraries Group is effective in highlighting some of the benefits of library services (Figure 20).

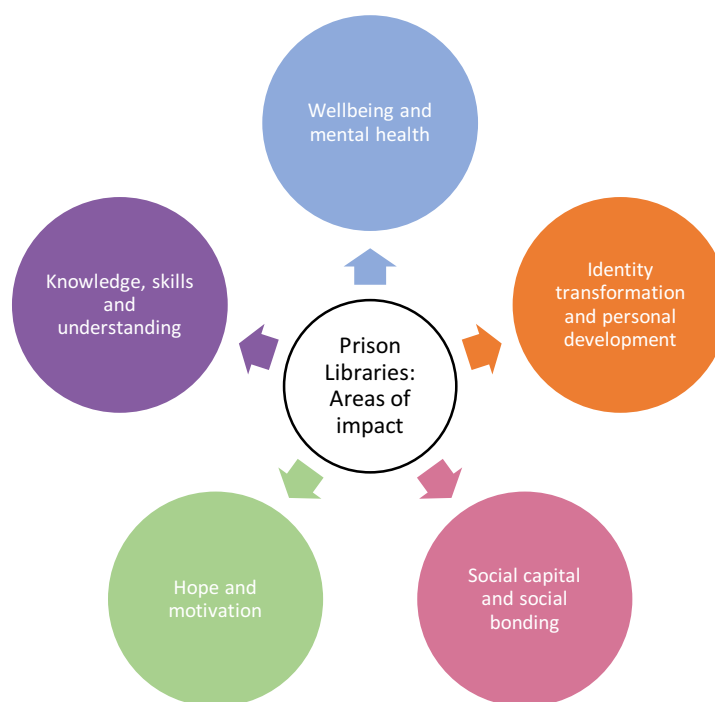
<i>“Visiting the library when I’m in prison...”</i>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
Makes me feel calmer	191 (46.02%)	140 (35.73%)	66 (15.9%)	12 (2.89%)	6 (1.45%)
Makes life seem more normal	178 (42.89%)	163 (39.28%)	48 (11.57%)	24 (5.78%)	2 (0.48%)
Makes me more likely to use a library when I’m out of prison	162 (39.04%)	116 (27.95%)	85 (20.48%)	41 (9.88%)	11 (2.65%)
I behave differently in the library than other parts of the prison	102 (24.58%)	94 (22.65%)	133 (32.05%)	47 (11.33%)	39 (9.4%)

**Figure 20.** Extract from Generic Social Outcomes Survey (CILIP Prison Libraries Group, 2018)

The above data shows, for example, that approximately 47% of respondents perceive their behaviour to be different in the library than elsewhere in the prison. What this percentage does not explain, however, is the way in which their behaviour differs or *why* this is the case. Carrying out qualitative research alongside this method of data collection would enable further understanding. The multi-method case study approach taken in this study allowed observation of engagement with library services and in-depth conversations with participants, which could help to find out how behaviour in the library is different than elsewhere. An ethnographic piece of research which observed engagement in different areas of the prison would be even more useful in distinguishing between behaviour and attitudes in different spaces in the prison. Ideally, a combination of both quantitative and qualitative research would strengthen the claims made about library impact. An experienced prison researcher, Liebling (1999, p.164) suggests that “qualitative and quantitative methodologies used in tandem...create a tension out of which satisfying and credible research can be built.” Usherwood (2002, p.120) agrees that a “more positive way forward is to accept that qualitative data, rigorously obtained, are valid, and to use them, together with the available statistics, to investigate the different organisational and managerial factors that help or hinder social impact.”

#### 7.3.4 Re-visiting the impact framework

The complex nature of evaluating the impact of social and cultural organisations, particularly when they exist within a prison setting, was carefully considered before conducting the second phase of research at two prison sites. Case study research was considered to be essential, as any study which takes place within a prison setting automatically takes on new complexities and must pay careful attention to the social setting and the unique experiences faced by the prison population. The initial plan was to conduct an ethnographic case study in one prison which would enable a more in-depth examination of a specific population's engagement with library services. Due to a challenging ethical application process, it was not possible for this approach to be taken. The resulting small-scale case studies captured the experiences of a limited sample of each prison population, eliciting a narrower range of perspectives than initially hoped for. The case studies were guided by a framework which was informed by existing research and theories from across the fields of librarianship, prison education and criminology. This model was presented and explained more fully in Chapter Two, and will be revisited now in light of the empirical research which has taken place. Due to the differences both in population and in prison library provision at each site, different areas of the framework came to the fore in each case study. It was arguably a more successful guide in helping to analyse findings from Hydebank, where most individuals engaged well with the space, resources and informal learning activities offered by the library. The case study at Barlinnie served instead to highlight the aspects of prisoners' experiences and needs which could be addressed by a more efficient library service, as prisoners discussed their frustrations with existing services and expressed their individual educational and information needs. Figure 21 is a reminder of the different areas of perceived impact of prison library services.



**Figure 21.** Areas of impact of prison libraries (Prison Library Impact Framework, Finlay, 2018a)

The following paragraphs discuss two of these areas of impact in detail – *wellbeing and mental health* and *identity transformation and personal development*. As the findings laid out in Chapters Six and Seven show, other areas listed in this framework were also observed during the case study research. It was decided to discuss these two specific areas further as they are the two areas of impact most clearly evidenced in the case study findings and because they serve as good examples of how new empirical findings can help to adapt and improve the proposed framework. A library's contribution to knowledge, skills and understanding will be considered further in the latter half of this chapter, when discussing the role of the library in the informal learning experiences of prisoners. The aim of the ensuing paragraphs is both to highlight the value of library services as shown in this study, and to review the appropriateness of this kind of theoretically informed framework as a tool to appropriately discuss the value of these services.

### 7.3.4.1 Wellbeing and mental health

**Table 16.** Finlay's 2018 Prison Library Impact Framework, *Wellbeing and Mental Health* section

Wellbeing and mental health		
Context	The library offers:	Possible outcomes:
<p>Incarceration can be an isolating experience, and many prisoners suffer from poor mental health, depression and substance abuse. Levels of self-harm and suicide are higher than the general population. Prison can be a volatile and stressful environment in which to live.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A safe, neutral space in the midst of an unsettling prison environment.</li> <li>• A range of recreational and educational resources that encourage reading for pleasure and informal learning.</li> <li>• A positive means of both mental and physical escape.</li> <li>• Written resources about wellbeing and mental health.</li> <li>• Information about health-related programmes and activities in other prison departments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced stress and improved wellbeing.</li> <li>• Better ability to cope with stressful situations.</li> <li>• A constructive use of time whilst incarcerated.</li> <li>• Creativity and enjoyment.</li> <li>• Increased understanding of individual health and mental health needs.</li> <li>• Increased engagement in other prison programmes or activities.</li> </ul>

One of the greatest challenges facing prisons is the low levels of mental health among the prison population, whose difficulties are often exacerbated by the isolating nature of the prison environment (Nurse et al., 2003; House of Commons, 2017; National Audit Office, 2017). It is not surprising that the theme of wellbeing and mental health was common across both case studies, although the role played by the library to support prisoner wellbeing differed at each site. The space of the library was particularly important for the young men at Hydebank, and even more so for those experiencing incarceration for the first time. It served as a place of refuge and escape from their intimidating and unfamiliar surroundings. The wellbeing of library users at Hydebank was also supported through the provision of activities such as informal reading groups, creative writing classes and poetry sessions. The main example of

these activities to be observed during the fieldwork period was Reading Aloud, where library users listened to and discussed stories read by a volunteer in the relaxed library setting. Interview findings revealed that this weekly programme was well-regarded by participants, due both to its informal and non-compulsory nature and the positive rapport that existed with the volunteer responsible for the session.

This positive rapport which existed not only with external volunteers, but also with prison library staff, was also found to play a role in supporting the wellbeing of prisoners. When asked about the best thing the library offered, participants in the Hydebank study spoke of the librarian and how well she treated them. This should challenge prisons to consider the need for professional library staff workers, rather than stationing prison officers to work in the library. As an earlier questionnaire respondent noted, *“we are seen as non-prison workers and are often privy to prisoners’ personal lives. They will confide in us and ask for advice or just want someone to listen”* (Respondent 1). Indeed, prison research is clear that interpersonal relationships are a central part of prison life, and that the interactions between staff and prisoners have implications for the wellbeing of prisoners (Liebling, 2011; Danks and Bradley, 2018). Although reading for pleasure was also noted as a means of relaxation for some participants, it was predominantly the space, the staff rapport and the informal learning opportunities that appeared to support the wellbeing of library users at Hydebank.

The same recreational opportunities were not afforded to prison library users at Barlinnie. The space here was notably different, used by prisoners only to find information and borrow resources. There were few activities or events on offer, and the reading groups which did exist were run by the education department and therefore accessible only to prisoners already participating in education classes. Interview participants who had spent time incarcerated at other prisons in Scotland reflected on the opportunities they had there to spend time reading in the library, or to take part in discussion groups, poetry classes or author events, lamenting that this was not possible at Barlinnie. It was the resources offered by the library at Barlinnie – books, DVDs and CDs – that were referred to most as offering mental stimulation and a



means of escape. One participant also noted the access to mental health information in the newspapers provided in the library.

Reflecting on this section of the framework and how it correlates to findings of this study, it is clear that much of what is outlined here was present in the findings. The resources provided by the library, the recreational and safe space it offers, as well as a range of engaging informal learning activities all seemed to contribute in part to the wellbeing of library users. Beyond the *constructive use of time* stated as a possible outcome, it could also be noted that library resources and activities were a source of *mental stimulation*, helping to combat the “long periods of isolation with little mental stimulus” that contribute to poor mental health (Nurse et al., 2003, p.480). It is also necessary to include *supportive staff members* as something the library can offer to wellbeing, as findings underlined the significant role played by staff in supporting and encouraging library users.

#### 7.3.4.2 Identity transformation and personal development

**Table 17.** Finlay’s 2018 Prison Library Impact Framework, *Identity transformation and personal development* section

Identity transformation and personal development		
Context	The library offers:	Possible outcomes:
<p>Prisoners may feel negatively about themselves, their achievements and their ability to change. They often associate with a negative, ‘criminal’ identity.</p> <p>Incarceration inherently limits an individual’s control over their own life, leading to a loss of both agency and autonomy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A range of literature, which reflects the background and experiences of the prison population.</li> <li>• Freedom to choose how individuals spend their time, what information they access and what recreational or educational interests they pursue.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of an alternative, positive identity e.g. parent, mentor, learner, reader, employee.</li> <li>• New perspectives of themselves, their past actions and their current situation.</li> <li>• The ability to express new ideas and engage with those holding different views.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intellectual freedom.</li> <li>• Informal, non-compulsory learning programmes and other recreational activities.</li> <li>• Family literacy programmes.</li> <li>• Peer-led literacy schemes.</li> <li>• Work experience as a library orderly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased autonomy and agency in an environment of control and discipline.</li> <li>• Greater self-awareness and a better understanding of own strengths.</li> </ul>
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Earlier discussions around desistance literature underlined the need for prisoners to shed their criminal identity and develop a new, pro-social identity as part of the change process (Maruna and LeBel, 2010). It was also noted that the very experience of imprisonment tends to cement rather than eradicate that criminal identity. It is therefore vital that a prison regime intent on supporting desistance actively seeks out and provides opportunities for prisoners to authentically explore and transform their identities as well as supporting their personal development. Liebling's study on the moral quality of prison life showed a preference among prisoners for the term "personal development" over terms like rehabilitation and resettlement "because the term reflected a less limited emphasis on growth and becoming" (2012, p.5).

The proposed framework suggests that libraries help to support this identity transformation and personal development through offering an autonomous learning space, where prisoners are free to choose how to spend their time and what recreational or intellectual interests to pursue. Libraries also offer a range of informal activities and events which allow individuals to explore their own experiences and backgrounds in a safe space, free of judgment or reprisal. Poignant examples of this were shared in the Hydebank case study, particularly the openness and vulnerability shown during participation in the Reading Aloud programme and diversity workshops (section 5.10.3). Although not specifically referring to the library, but rather the impact of books and education on his life, a participant at Barlinnie also shared experiences

about his transformation, noting that he now has opportunities to speak publicly on the outside and share his experiences with young people (section 6.11.2).

The framework also mentions the peer literacy and family literacy opportunities that are often facilitated by prison library services, which can help to support both identity transformation and personal development. Peer mentoring programmes allow participants to develop skills as a teacher or mentor, and family literacy programmes support individuals in their role as a parent or grandparent. The Shannon Trust's Turning Pages programme was alluded to by one prisoner participant at Hydebank, and the volunteer who helps to co-ordinate this peer literacy scheme spoke of the positive impact it can have on both mentor and learner. It was not however examined enough to produce significant findings. An evaluation of Turning Pages carried out in 2016 (Hopkins and Kendall) is useful in showing the value and impact of this programme. Family literacy programmes were also discussed briefly at each prison site but not explored in detail. It is recommended again to read evaluations of individual family literacy programmes to grasp a fuller understanding of their benefits (see Blumberg and Griffin, 2013; Finlay, 2014; Nutbrown et al., 2019).

In an attempt to positively label individuals at Hydebank, individuals are now officially referred to as "students" rather than "young offenders" or "prisoners." Conversations with both staff and prisoners during the fieldwork period revealed that this was mostly dismissed by prisoners, who made frequent comments about the fact that they viewed Hydebank as a prison and not a school, as they were not free to leave at the end of the day. Although this was a well-intentioned move by the NIPS to remove the stigma associated with these negative labels, it highlights once more how it is the actual treatment of individuals which matters most. Referring to the prison librarian, a female participant noted that she treats library users *"like a human being"* and *"not like a number"* (Michelle). This echoes what one library staff member noted in the first phase of the study, *"we're not in uniform, so we don't kind of treat them as prisoners as such, we treat them as our readers. I think that's most appreciated thing about it"* (Participant D).

Similar to the *wellbeing and mental health* section of the framework, findings again suggest that library staff can be added to the list of what the library offers to support the identity transformation and personal development of prisoners. This section is also an example of how a framework informed by desistance research can help reveal the deeper meaning of library outcomes. While it may at first seem insignificant that civilian library staff treat prisoners simply as library users, prison sociology and desistance research enables us to see the deeper significance of this in terms of contributing to the wellbeing, personal development and desistance of prisoners. Liebling's research underlined the importance of interpersonal relationships and the impact that differing "levels of respect, fairness and humanity" can have on the prison experience (Liebling, 2011, p.533.) Prisoner participants in her study viewed respect as "recognition of the inherent dignity and worth of the person, and of the difference between individuals" (Liebling, assisted by Arnold, 2004, p.212). Again, this helps us to see more clearly the value of prison library staff and how they contribute to the lives of people in prison.

This overview of the areas of impact most evident in this study not only highlights some of the benefits of library engagement, but also shows the ways in which a strong conceptual framework can help to interpret and give deeper meaning to qualitative accounts of this engagement. Usherwood (2002, p.119) acknowledges that librarians are capable of describing library activities "but fail to demonstrate their impact in a way that will persuade politicians and policymakers." This framework offers a shared language between library outcomes and desistance-supporting prison policies, which could help librarians to demonstrate their value in a way that is meaningful to policymakers. It also allows library researchers and practitioners to entertain the possibility of stronger alignment with correctional goals without straying from the principles and goals of the library profession. This discussion has also shown how the framework can be adapted and improved as more empirical evidence is collected, hopefully acting as a springboard for more theoretically informed and empirically grounded prison library research in the future.

### 7.3.5 The importance of space

“While public libraries do an excellent job of promoting their important role in providing access to information, educational resources, technology, and a host of valuable services, they must also promote the value of public library space itself.” (Barclay, 2017, p.267)

The above quote about public library spaces could equally be applied to prison libraries. The space offered by the prison library arguably plays an even more crucial role in the lives of its users, given the wider social environment in which these individuals spend their time. An advantage of using the multi-method case study approach is that it not only allowed insights from interview and focus group participants about how they perceived and experienced the library space, but also provided the opportunity to observe first-hand prisoners’ engagement with this space.

References to the library as a “normal zone,” a “sanctuary” or an “oasis” are prevalent throughout prison library literature (Vogel, 2009; Lehmann, 2011; Lgodel and Ra, 2011), and the findings presented in the previous three chapters are cognizant with such statements. Library staff in the first phase of research noted that the library was a “nice, safe, neutral space” for prisoners (Participant J). This was most visible during the case study at Hydebank, where one of the main themes was *library as place*.

Participants viewed library visits as offering a break from the prison environment and for some it was considered to be a refuge or sanctuary. This was particularly evident among more vulnerable library users, or those entering Hydebank for the first time. Although more time was spent speaking with the young men at Hydebank and observing their library sessions, female participants also spoke of the recreational nature of the library, describing it as a space which “*does your head good*” (Cara, focus group) and as a “*break from work and classes*” (Lisa, focus group). Participants in Barlinnie lamented the fact that this was not the case with their library, where there was no time nor physical space to spend longer than 15 minutes browsing books in the library. They reflected on experiences in other prisons where you could spend time

sitting and reading *“just like a normal library”* (David) and noted this was an aspect of the service they would change if they were put in charge of the library.

Beyond this description of the library as a safe and normal space within the prison, research conducted by Crewe et al. (2014) leads to further reflection on the significance of such a space within this closed setting. Their work considers the “prison’s complex emotional world” and challenges the view that prisons are “unwaveringly sterile, unfailingly aggressive and undifferentiated” (p.57). While accepting that prisons often give rise to instances of violence and aggression, and that prisoners sometimes wear masks to hide their vulnerability, they also point to places and situations within the prison where these masks are likely to come off and spaces which facilitate more open and honest interactions. They view these spaces as different “emotion zones” in which “certain kinds of emotional feelings and displays are more or less acceptable” (p.56). While their study refers explicitly to visit rooms, education classes and the chapel, the Hydebank case study in particular makes clear that this could also apply to the library space. The librarian here had cultivated an environment and planned events and activities which facilitated open conversations among people with diverse backgrounds and perspectives, where they could speak about potentially controversial topics without fear of reprisal or threat of violence. The diversity workshop described in section 5.10.1 offers a clear example of this. The young men present in the workshop were encouraged to discuss their existing prejudices and from where these had stemmed. Participants identified as being from either Protestant or Catholic backgrounds and, although often a point of contention in Northern Ireland, were encouraged to consider how their different upbringings impacted upon their current beliefs and perceptions of other people. They freely reminisced about their experiences of rioting prior to incarceration and discussed how the buying and selling of drugs would sometimes bring the two communities together. In a prison system deeply divided along religious and political lines, library staff noted that these conversations were unlikely to take place so openly and calmly in other areas of the prison.

Similar vulnerability was shown during the weekly Reading Aloud sessions, where the short stories or poems prompted conversations about family life and the challenges of being incarcerated. Crewe et al. (2014, p.68) consider education classes to be a space where such conversations can take place, where prisoners are able to “relax into student identities” and speak more freely with each other. This study suggests that, in Hydebank at least, the library is even more prone to encourage this kind of openness due to the informal nature of the activities that take place in the library space and the lack of pressure to participate. This was recognised by one of the teachers at Hydebank, who compared the Reading Aloud sessions to the more formal education they provide in classrooms, stating, *“it’s nice to not feel expected to give back...There’s no pressure to speak up”* (Staff Member 1).

Referring to “the determining force of space”, Crewe et al. (2014, p.71) recognised that it is not just the “physical or architectural, but resides in the ways that places carry meanings, harbor and cultivate particular practices and sentiments, are devised for specific activities, and are populated by certain personnel.” There is much to unpack in this statement in relation to the prison library. In both case studies, it was evident that libraries carried a pre-existing meaning for individuals, due to their experiences of using public and school libraries prior to incarceration. Although some participants acknowledged that they had rarely made use of such library services, most shared positive examples of their library experiences. Women at Hydebank and participants in the Barlinnie study recounted how they associated public libraries with family time, remembering how they had once brought their children to use the library. Others became nostalgic about their own time using the library as a child. For some in Barlinnie, the public library was a place to use Wi-Fi when they had no other means of accessing the internet. Reflections on public library engagement revealed the sense of trust that is commonly associated with library spaces (Vårheim, 2009; Johnson, 2012). For Johnson (2012), it is the interactions that occur between staff and patrons that have the capacity to build trust, connect people to resources and reduce social isolation. This points again to the role of library staff or the “certain personnel” referred to by Crewe et al. (2014, p.71) who occupy the library space. Existing perceptions of the library space may therefore affect how the library is viewed by

prisoners and impact upon levels of engagement with library services. This stands in contrast to the previously noted negative association attributed to formal education provision which may exist among prisoners, and is a strong argument for the differentiation of library services from education provision in prisons.

This study suggests that the uniqueness of the prison library space lies in the combination of these factors: positive existing associations, the range of informal, non-compulsory activities and programmes that take place in the library, and the trustworthy, civilian staff members who provide these services. The findings related to the distinct nature of the library space merit further discussion and it is advised that future research on the learning experiences of prisoners examines closely the space in which this learning takes place (see recommendations for future research in section 8.5).

#### 7.4 The role of the library in facilitating informal learning experiences

Any public or prison library has functions outside of providing learning resources or supporting intellectual pursuits. As this study has shown, the library serves as an important recreational space where prisoners can have a break from their daily regime, spend time chatting to staff or other library users or choose books, CDs and DVDs to help pass the time. It is important to note this before discussing the educational role of the library and its relationship with the prison education department, so as to make clear that the library is a unique and distinct entity with its own ethos and principles separate to those of education providers. The previous section also noted the importance of distinguishing between the two services. Nevertheless, supporting the education and learning experiences of prisoners is a key role of the prison library. The Council of Europe's *Recommendations on Education in Prison* (1990) recognise well the educational function of the prison library:

*“The value and the possibilities of libraries are often underestimated. Their educational function for prisoners has two dimensions to it. Libraries support*



*and extend the learning that takes place in classes by providing books and other materials, and by serving as locations for organised activities. But libraries are also an important source of informal education in their own right and are often used by those who do not join other educational activities or courses.*

...

*Close cooperation between library and teaching staff is essential so that both of these aspects are promoted.”*

(Council of Europe, 1990, p.34)

This section of the discussion chapter addresses the two roles outlined here. It considers both the informal learning opportunities offered by the library, and discusses its role in supporting prisoners' formal education experiences. It also wrestles with the final statement above, drawing on findings from each phase of this research to discuss levels of collaboration between library and teaching staff, and the implications of this collaboration for the learning experiences of prisoners.

#### 7.4.1 Informal learning in prisons

As discussed in Chapter Two, there is a growing body of research which acknowledges the importance of providing informal, non-compulsory learning opportunities in prison (Irwin, 2008; Behan, 2014; Warr, 2016). Part of the impetus for conducting this research was the recognition that the library has long facilitated these kinds of learning opportunities but has not always received the attention in merits, neither in prison education research nor policy. As prison policymakers begin to be influenced by desistance research and start paying more serious attention to the importance of informal learning, the ground is fertile to explore and to advocate the library's role in the informal learning experiences of prisoners. While this project has begun to explore these experiences on a relatively small scale, it recommends future collaboration with prison education researchers to more fully investigate the experiences of informal learning taking place in library settings. Prison library professionals and prison educators have much to learn from each other about how their distinct values,

practices and learning spaces effectively contribute to a prisoner's experience of learning.

Re-iterating earlier discussions, this research considers informal learning to be the kind of learning "which we undertake individually or collectively on our own without externally imposed criteria or the presence of an institutionally organised instructor" (Livingstone, 1999, p.493) and stems from "expressed interest and needs" of individuals (McGivney, 1999, p.v). McGivney adds that it may also include structured short courses, but ones which are delivered in "flexible and informal ways" (ibid.). The library as a facilitator of these kind of learning opportunities was observed most clearly at Hydebank, and further examples were noted by library staff members working across the various prison sites represented in the first phase of the study. Informal learning took place in a number of ways at Hydebank - through organised but informal, non-compulsory and non-accredited literacy related programmes and events, through instances of self-directed learning and through unexpected or accidental learning that took place during conversations with other prisoners, staff members and volunteers within the social learning setting of the library space.

Some of the organised activities observed at Hydebank include the Reading Aloud sessions each Wednesday morning, the diversity workshop run alongside volunteers from TIDES, book discussion groups, book-folding and the discussion of documentaries. The timetable also indicated that sign language classes and poetry classes took place throughout the week (Figure 18). Although not observed at the time, participants referred to the Shannon Trust's peer-literacy programme and their participation in creative writing workshops during the summer. One of the things which sets these kind of programmes apart from other learning programmes is that they were voluntary in nature. This was recognised to be an important aspect by the volunteers and staff running the programmes. The temporary autonomy this afforded to prisoners was a main finding in the Hydebank case study, with both male and female participants expressing frustration at the controlling nature of their environment and their limited opportunities to make their own choices or decisions.

Another aspect of these learning programmes which may make them more appealing to prisoners is that they are non-accredited, and therefore unlikely to be associated with more formal education qualifications promoted by the prison which could be interpreted as simply another means of rehabilitation. Harris (2005, p.215) poignantly describes the attitude prisoners have toward organised programmes or courses in prison. She states that there is “a sense that these interventions involve things ‘done to’ or ‘prescribed for’ passive recipients who are characterised as deficient, ineffectual, misguided, untrustworthy, possibly dangerous, and almost certain to get into trouble again.” Warr (2016, p.21) suggests that this applies even to education, which may be viewed as “an intervention concerned with correcting a prisoner’s offending behaviour.” In recounting his experiences of education during a period of incarceration, Warr (2016) draws on three particular classes which had made a lasting impact on him. All three were examples of non-accredited classes, which encouraged critical discussion and where “learning for learning’s sake was privileged, embraced and celebrated” (p.23). Speaking of his participation in a non-accredited General Studies class, he notes, “The class had no auditable merit in the traditional sense – but as a learning experience it was once of the most powerful I have ever experienced” (ibid.). This is a strong challenge to the provision of both education classes and library services at Hydebank, which have become compulsory since Hydebank transitioned into a Secure College. The resentment toward compulsory attendance was evident from the findings in this case study. Prison education research indicates that students are unlikely to feel motivated to learn or participate if they feel they are being forced to do so as part of a Government strategy to rehabilitate and to reduce reoffending.

Although the library at Barlinnie does not currently offer the kind of informal learning programmes and events often offered in other prison libraries, participants did refer to previous participation in peer learning and family literacy programmes when they were available at Barlinnie. They also spoke highly about past author events and reading groups which they attended, and made clear they would like to have access to such events again. The engagement with the project-themed learning approach in the education department did give insights into their experience of education, and

suggested an increased level of engagement since this new approach was implemented. Project-themed learning is “based on a liberal arts approach to education offering a range of creative activities and building learning around the needs of the individual as much as possible.” (King, 2018, para.2). The flexibility and creativity inherent in this approach offered prisoners a sense of ownership over their own learning. Warr (2016) also discussed the fact that the flexibility inherent in informal learning offers the student a chance to shape the lesson, as tutors can take on board student interests and the way they like to learn and adapt the lesson accordingly. Warr adds that the classroom then becomes a “collaborative space” (p.24) rather than the more top-down, teacher led structure which is linked to previous negative experiences of classroom learning. The Reading Aloud sessions at Hydebank offered a good example of the flexibility of informal learning methods. The volunteer noted how she found out some of the interests of the groups who attended her sessions and tried to find stories and poems related to these interests.

Informal learning can also be learning that happens without the presence of a teacher, librarian or volunteer. One of the main themes to emerge from the Hydebank study was the role of the library in facilitating self-directed learning. As seen in these findings, the resources offered by the library and the lengthy library sessions available to prisoners enabled instances of self-directed learning, or what one participant dubbed “*self-education*” (Jack). This was also referred to by participants in the Barlinnie case study. Despite not having as much access to library resources they would have liked, they acknowledged that the range of books and DVDs in the library enabled them to pursue individual interests, support educational endeavours and even to stumble upon new interests. Focus group participants noted how their reading interests had changed and expanded since they entered prison. These opportunities again remove any forced elements of education and gives individuals a sense of control over their learning choices.

Findings from Hydebank also suggested that library engagement could encourage participation in other educational or vocational programmes in the prison. A study

carried out in a Belgian prison explored prisoners' participation in a wide range of programmes, and surmised that library use could be a "bridge to participation" in these programmes (Brosens et al., 2015). This was due to the information provided by library staff, which alerted prisoners to other events and programmes taking place in the prison. At Hydebank, the "bridge" seemed to be the safe space it offered for individuals who, after spending some time engaging with library staff and other prisoners in a relaxed environment, felt more confident to take part in other classes or programmes. It may even help to mitigate the prior negative experiences of formal education (Warr, 2016). This is not to say that the informal nature of the library should be seen simply as a vehicle to more formal, accredited opportunities, because we have seen clearly that informal learning is important in and of itself. As Warr (2016, p.24) notes, informal learning "provides a means of learning that can be efficacious for the individual (and beyond) in ways that formal, remedial and instrumental education cannot."

#### 7.4.2 Liaison between library services and education departments

It was made clear in the first phase of this study that the relationship and level of communication between libraries and education services varied widely across institutions. Approximately half of questionnaire respondents noted that the library was considered to be part of the wider education department in their prison, whereas the remainder of represented prison sites viewed the two services as separate entities. Some library staff noted strong levels of collaboration with education staff, stating that they worked together on literacy programmes and events, attended relevant meetings together where they shared stories of good practice, or had teaching staff bring students to the library during classes to conduct research. Others noted little collaboration with the education department, and pointed to various reasons which hindered their liaison. Physical location of the library was an important factor in their collaboration. If the library was located within a separate space within the prison, it made shared events or class trips to the library a challenging endeavour. It was also pointed out that the level of liaison often depended on individual staff members and their willingness to work together. It was evident that there was a lack of consistency

across institutions in terms of library services and education providers working together to support the education of prisoners.

Initial findings caused this issue to be a growing focus in the study, and the subsequent case studies not only explored prisoners' engagement with library services but also the relationship with the wider education department and how this impacted upon the learning experiences of prisoners. As the definitions of literacy and learning in prisons widen and the focus on informal learning opportunities becomes more significant, the topic becomes even more important in prison research and policy. The two case studies presented two very different and enlightening scenarios in this sense, revealing interesting findings about the role of the library in the wider learning process and how the extent of collaboration between library and teaching impacted upon this process. The following paragraphs will consider each site in turn. One set of findings revealed the implications of having the library closely linked to the education department (Hydebank), while the next set of findings discussed the implications of the library serving as a completely separate entity with little communication between library and education staff (Barlinnie).

At Hydebank Wood College, the library was located centrally within the education department. Recent changes to education provision at Hydebank meant that library sessions were now factored into a prisoner's daily timetable alongside their other education classes. Those timetabled for a library session would then spend three hours in the library either in the morning or afternoon, where they could spend their time reading or relaxing or taking part in the learning activities offered by library staff. Education staff liaised closely with library staff, and it was clear that education staff members thought highly of the prison librarian and the support she offered both to prisoners and to other prison staff members. Twice during the period of fieldwork, the literacy teacher brought her students to the library during class and worked with them at a desk in the corner while other library visitors were taking part in the scheduled library activities. The art teacher and librarian also worked closely together on a range of events and exhibitions. During the fieldwork period, an exhibition of art created by prisoners at Hydebank took place at a local public library. This event was a

collaboration between the NIPS, Libraries NI and Belfast Metropolitan College, serving as a positive example of the partnerships that existed and the level of liaison between relevant staff members and departments in the prison. Following the changes made to education provision at Hydebank in 2016, the librarian was also now included in weekly education staff meetings, which discussed the progress of individual students and any issues that needed to be flagged in order to best support individuals.

There were positive and negative implications of having the library space so closely intertwined with the education department at Hydebank. It was not overlooked as a service in the way some prison libraries are. It was clearly appreciated by staff members across the prison, who spoke highly of library staff and the level of support offered to prisoners in the library space. Library use was frequent as most prisoners were timetabled to visit the library at least once during the week, unless employed in full-time roles elsewhere in the prison. Education staff were appreciative of the support offered by the library, noting both the provision of resources to support their classes and the individual support offered by library staff in helping students with their educational goals and general wellbeing. The librarian was glad to be included in weekly education meetings, and alluded to a sense of general inclusion with the wider department. Having the library centrally located in the education corridor made it possible for such close liaison to exist.

There were also serious drawbacks of having timetabling library sessions in the same way as formal classes, leading the library to be viewed as a compulsory session rather than a voluntary endeavour. This change in function was repeatedly mentioned by participants, who lamented the fact that they were now forced to come and spend three hours sitting in the library instead of them choosing to visit the library. Both prisoner and staff participants showed frustration at this, understanding that the library should not serve as an education class and had its own role which was no longer being respected at Hydebank. The autonomy offered by prison libraries, both in terms of the library being an optional service and offering the freedom to choose how to spend one's time once in the library, has been noted as one of the library's greatest strengths and the main reason that it differs from the experience of taking part in

more formal education classes. As stated by a questionnaire respondent, *“The strength of prison libraries and professional library staff is that their remit is different from providing formal education and provides the chance of more flexibility”* (Respondent 20). Aligning library sessions with education classes at Hydebank strips away this opportunity for autonomy and freedom of choice, and elicited a clear resentment from both staff and students.

The situation at Barlinnie was almost at the opposite end of the scale in terms of the level of collaboration and communication between library and education staff. The library here was situated in the Communications Hub, which was in a separate location to the rest of the education department and prevented any movement between the two locations during classes. Prisoners were strictly scheduled for short visits to the library, which were not in any way related to their class timetable. There was little communication between the officers running the Communication Hub and the staff from Fife College based in the education department. Tutor B noted that she was once able to bring her students to the library during class, but this was no longer possible because of security levels and a strict prison regime. Another tutor affirmed this challenge, and agreed that ideally *“there should be more of a link”* (Tutor A). Staff did not appear to work together on any events or organised literacy programmes. Initiatives more traditionally associated with the prison library, such as reading groups or author events, seemed to be organised solely by education staff and, as a result, were only accessible by prisoners choosing to participate in education classes.

This lack of liaison was discussed with both staff and prisoner participants. Prisoners were unanimous in their view that the library was *“totally separate”* from the education department (Deepak) and that there was a *“definite disconnect”* between the two services (Kurt). Focus group participants raised the issue with their tutor, suggesting that it would be good to get more time in the library by visiting as part of their class. One interview participant also believed that education should be doing more to *“get people involved with library stuff”* but also recognised that being too involved could lead to the library becoming *“only about education”* (David).



It seems clear that, while each service remains distinct, close co-operation between the library and the education department in prisons would enhance the overall learning experience of prisoners, and help to break down the already siloed nature of the prison environment. There are evident barriers preventing smooth co-cooperation, particularly if security measures and the location of each department prevent ready access to each other. Staff members should make a concentrated effort to meet together to share good practice and discuss how best to support each other and support prisoners. The role of informal and social learning opportunities in engaging prisoners with education, in developing critical skills and in offering opportunities for autonomy make this collaboration even more crucial. Again, building a stronger evidence base which shows the role of the library in informal learning could help to persuade relevant policymakers and senior prison management of the benefits of stronger collaboration, and encourage them to address the challenges which currently hinder such liaison.

#### 7.4.3 Access to technology and the internet

Although not a main focus of this research project, it is important to address the issue of accessing technology and online information, particularly with regard to how it impacts upon the learning experiences of prisoners and the role of the library in helping to support digital literacy. Access to the internet is one of the most pressing challenges facing prison libraries and the wider prison (Lehmann, 2011; Conrad, 2016). Fears over security, coupled with financial restraints and lack of expertise to oversee developments prevent prisoners from accessing technology and online information which can be vital for their education and personal development. Some discussion of the information and technology needs of prisoners at HMP Barlinnie can be found in section 6.9.2. Frustration at the lack of access to computers and to the internet was noted by prisoners and staff at each site. Prison participants at Barlinnie noted their use of computers in previous prison libraries and criticised the lack of access to computers in the library at Barlinnie. Although there was access to computers for

those participating in ICT classes at Hydebank, others were excluded from this opportunity:

*"I can't get on a computer in here. We're not allowed technology at all."*

(Junior)

*We don't get to use the computers though, I'd like to be able to do that. I did ICT back at GCSE.* (Daniel)

*I've been on a computer three times the whole time I've been in here. And no we can't get online cos it's prison so you know we can't do that.* (Aaron)

*And it'd be good to have better computer access, like in public libraries. It's so frustrating not to be able to get online you know, even just to check little things, like you would outside. When you grab your phone to look up something on Google, but of course you can't do that in here.* (Michelle)

Education staff at Hydebank also referred to the challenge of accessing online resources:

*Has [the librarian] talked to you about internet access? That's one of the frustrating things for everyone in education. I mean I understand why they can't access the internet, but it's difficult when they're trying to learn and trying to get qualifications. But [the librarian] is able to help them find things. She'll look stuff up for them if she has time and it's appropriate. Volunteers also come in during the week for those doing online courses, and sit with them and look up information that they need. Students can't access the internet but as long as the volunteer is beside them it's ok.* (Staff Member 3)

This use of volunteers is one of the initiatives used to overcome barriers to internet access, especially for those involved in education courses. Virtual Campus, a secure intranet system, is also used in prisons to provide restricted access to online resources.

Provision of Virtual Campus is inconsistent across prison sites. Questionnaire findings from the first phase of this study showed that only five libraries offered access to Virtual Campus, although a further six respondents noted that this was provided by the education department rather than the library. Most respondents agreed that prisoners did not have sufficient access to IT resources in the library (74%). During the Barlinnie case study, Stakeholder A noted that there is a “*state of the art intranet*” provided in Scottish prisons which he considered to be “*probably as good as it can be without having online access.*” Both CILIP (2016) and Champion and Edgar (2013) recognise the potential of Virtual Campus but only if its access, content and usability is significantly improved.

A study by Jewkes and Reisdorf (2016) exploring new media technologies in prison highlights the digital inequalities experienced by prisoners, describing people in prison as “one of the most impoverished groups in the digital age” (p.534). Champion and Edgar (2013) echo this sentiment and point to the widening digital divide between prisoners and the general public which will inevitably lead to difficulties during resettlement. One participant at Hydebank referred to the way in which incarceration excludes individuals from digital developments on the outside:

*When I get out I'll not even know how to do normal things. Like the last time I got out for a bit, and that was only after 15 months, I didn't even know how to use a normal phone. All my mates were laughing at me cos I didn't know what to do with the phone. I think it was the iPhone 4 then and I hadn't a clue. So I don't know what it'll be like after another few years. (Aaron)*

There is a duty to equip prisoners with the skills crucial to personal and professional development to counter the challenges they will face when leaving prison. Jewkes and Reisdorf (2016, p.549) warn that poor digital literacy skills can cause a “profound and unprecedented level of disconnection” between prisoners and society which leads to “deep, long-term social exclusion of individuals who have been sentenced to custody.” Supporting the digital literacy of library users is a key role of any public library. Public libraries not only provide access to technology and online resources, but also provide

access to professional staff who can help use and navigate these resources. There is potential for prison library staff to play an important role in supporting the digital literacy of people in prison, but only if equipped with the resources to do so. Further research into the information needs of prisoners could help to inform how developments in this area are shaped and implemented. The recommendations arising from this research (section 8.5) include exploring the digital needs of library users and how prison libraries could help to facilitate online access. This study also recommends carrying out research on the information needs of those completing Higher Education courses and the ways in which they access the online information necessary for undertaking these courses.

## 7.5 Summary of chapter

This chapter addressed the two main research questions of this study, exploring both the implications of desistance research for understanding the value of library services and the role of the library in providing informal learning opportunities for prisoners. It expounded on the analysis presented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, exploring these findings alongside relevant literature and theory. It also revisited the conceptual framework presented in Chapter Two, reflecting on its suitability as a way of demonstrating the value of library services and how it may be used to build a stronger evidence base for prison library engagement. Both sections of this chapter highlight the importance of including prison library services in the burgeoning field of prison education research and in future strategic planning for the provision of education in prisons. Drawing on existing knowledge from the fields of librarianship, education and criminology can give researchers a fuller grasp of the value of these services. Prison library research cannot be siloed, in the same way that the library itself should not be isolated within the prison. The following chapter explores these claims further by considering the implications of the study's findings for policy and service provision, as well as offering recommendations for future research in the fields of librarianship and prison education.

## Chapter Eight: Conclusion

### 8.1 Introduction

Previous chapters have presented and discussed the findings of this research, proposing a new framework for orienting prison library research. Findings have contributed to the lack of existing knowledge on prisoners' engagement with library services and some of the factors at play in prisons which hinder effective provision of these services. This final chapter summarises these findings by detailing how they have addressed each of the research questions. It then offers recommendations for future research based on the findings and limitations of this project. Recommendations for change at each case study site are also provided. The chapter concludes by reiterating the uniqueness of the project and its original contribution to the fields of prison librarianship and prison education research.

### 8.2 Revisiting research questions

The following paragraphs address each secondary research question in turn, before summarising how these have helped to answer the overriding research questions in this project.

- *How have recent policy changes impacted upon the provision of prison library services in Northern Ireland and Scotland?*

This has been answered both through a thorough examination of existing policy and strategy documents and inspection reports and by the data collected during each case study in the second phase of this research. Recent policy changes and development strategies within the NIPS and the SPS were outlined in Chapters One, Five and Six. In Northern Ireland, two consecutive reports published in 2011 laid out a plan for an overhaul of the NIPS (PRT, 2011a and 2011b). The progress made in the NIPS since 2011 is based on the 40 recommendations outlined in these reports. The *Supporting*

*Change: A Strategic Approach to Desistance* report (DOJNI, 2015) noted some of these developments and underlined the importance of embedding principles from desistance research into both policy and practice. One of the most significant developments based on these recommendations was the outsourcing of all prison education to both Belfast Metropolitan College and North West Regional College. This has generally led to more positive inspection reports of learning and skills provision in each prison site (see CJINI, 2015b, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c). Despite a renewed focus on education, there is no mention in the *Supporting Change* report of how a library service can help to contribute to this goal of supporting desistance. There is, in fact, very little written about library services outside of what can be read in individual prison inspection reports. Interviews with both prison and public library staff in this study revealed that library staff from the three prisons in Northern Ireland meet together throughout the year with public library staff and the Head of Learning and Skills in the NIPS to discuss the provision of library services across the prison estate. There exists a Memorandum of Understanding between the NIPS and Libraries NI to outline the different responsibilities held within the partnership.

The first case study presented in this research focused solely on the library service at Hydebank Wood College, so little can be said about how policy changes have impacted upon library provision at HMP Magilligan or HMP Maghaberry. The case study research revealed that changes in education provision at Hydebank have had significant implications for the way in which library services are delivered. Library staff work closely with staff members from Belfast Metropolitan College and attend weekly meetings to share good practice stories and ideas. While this close collaboration was seen to be a positive development, there were other changes which were criticised by both prisoners and staff members. Where library visits were once an optional choice for prisoners, they are now timetabled alongside other education classes. Staff and prisoners agreed that the library is now treated as more of a classroom, where prisoners have to spend 2-3 hours at a time in the library space. This is difficult for library staff, who are now under pressure to organise more activities that could engage prisoners for longer periods of time, even if those prisoners do not want to be there. Education staff were also frustrated by this change, for they recognised the value of

the library as a place where prisoners could freely exercise choice. Prisoner participants also expressed frustration at the timetabling of library sessions. Even though they appreciated the library service and spoke positively about library staff, they did not feel that the library was a place where they should be forced to come and spend such a long period of time. These feelings were shared both by the young men and women prisoners held at Hydebank.

Significant organisational changes have also taken place in the Scottish Prison Service over the past decade. Similar to the NIPS, their changing policies have been strongly influenced by desistance research and they recognise the potential of educational opportunities in prison to support the desistance of prisoners. Education provision is outsourced to a Further Education college (Fife College) and takes a project-themed learning approach where projects are based around contemporary issues and can be adapted according to the needs and interests of students. In a move away from viewing education as simply a way of gaining qualifications and improving future changes of employment, Stakeholder A noted that *“qualifications are not the key driver of what we do”* and emphasised the broad view of literacy held by the SPS which *“includes the ability to form ideas and express opinions.”* This is indicative of a more holistic approach to education provision across the SPS, which considers the personal development and individual interests of prisoners and is well-aligned to the concepts of narrative change and personal trajectories which are central to desistance research.

The opportunity to interview a policy stakeholder in the SPS and to visit two other prisons during this period of fieldwork meant that findings were able to speak more broadly of recent changes made to the provision of library services across the prison estate. *An Inquiry into Purposeful Activity in Prisons* (Scottish Parliament, 2013) revealed the inconsistency in library provision across sites and led to an audit of prison library services in 2015. Library provision was now also placed under the remit of the Learning and Skills division. The results of this audit led to significant changes in library provision at a number of sites, especially those who had scored poorly in the audit. Such positive changes were not evident in the case study which took place at HMP Barlinnie and Stakeholder A commented that they were still working on making *“the*

*necessary changes to other prisons where the library hasn't been given the same attention.*" It was clear throughout this second case study that there was a growing recognition by the SPS of the important role played by the library in the educational experiences of prisoners. Further evidence of this was that a National Libraries Forum had been set up, where library staff, library officers and other relevant prison staff members meet together quarterly to share ideas and discuss library provision.

- *How do staff members perceive the role and value of library services?*

Although this project was mostly concerned with giving a voice to prison library users, interviewing staff members involved with library provision enabled a broader view of library services and allowed for triangulation of prisoner interview and observation data. Interviewing staff also unveiled some of the wider policy and organisational factors which impacted upon service provision and ultimately upon the experiences of prisoners using library services.

There was an overriding sense of frustration among staff participants in the first phase of this study, who referred to the ways in which the library was overlooked within the prison. It was noted that the library was afforded low priority within the prison regime and was rarely included in prisoner inductions. Some library staff felt undervalued by other prison staff, who seemed unaware of the role of the library and the range of services it offered. When discussing the reason behind being overlooked and misunderstood, staff pointed to the fact that having two managers – both the prison and the local Public Library Authority – meant that neither body took full responsibility for the service and it often fell between the cracks. Staff also raised concerns about not having to provide outcomes of their services to either of these managers. Although this placed less pressure on library staff to meet any kind of performance indicators, it also meant that there was little more than anecdotal evidence of how library resources and programmes benefited library users. This was something that had been noted and begun to be addressed by policymakers in the Scottish Prison Service. Findings of the second case study revealed that a lack of performance indicators or outcomes evidence had led to an inconsistency in library service provision across the prison



estate and a resulting audit was taken of all prison library services. Chapter Six outlines some of the changes which took place following this audit and suggests that accountability of service provision can increase the visibility of the library service and impact positively on future service development. The key concern here is to find an appropriate and meaningful way of speaking about the value and impact of library services, which acknowledges the complexities involved when researching the impact of social and cultural organisations. This is, in part, what this research project seeks to do, by moving beyond statistical research to offering qualitative evidence of the impact of prison library services.

Not all staff members felt that their service was undervalued in the prison. Two interview participants in the first phase of the study were generally positive about how the library was perceived within the prison, with one even noting that the library was considered to be *“the hub of the education department”* (Participant H). These staff members also noted that it was the attitude of the main Governor or Director which had the most impact on how the library had been valued and supported within each prison. According to Participant H, the Governor had *“dramatically improved access.”* Participant I noted *“the support, the exposure”* given by the previous Director, but how this had changed when a new Director came to the prison who had less of an interest in library services. This issue of support from the Governor was also evident at Hydebank. The library and the many services and events offered by staff here were known and recognised by the Governor, resulting in strong support of proposed library initiatives.

There was general agreement among library staff in how they viewed the purpose and the value of the library within the prison. The survey of library staff in Phase One revealed the primary goal of libraries was to facilitate access to information, followed closely by supporting education, self-study and reading for pleasure. They perceived the most common reason for using library services to be borrowing books and escaping from the prison environment. This view of the library as a place of escape was especially evident at Hydebank, where the library was seen both as a recreational space and a place of refuge within a challenging environment. There was also

agreement among staff when discussing the role of the library in supporting the desistance of prisoners. The library could certainly contribute through staff empowerment of prisoners, skills development, improving wellbeing and offering opportunities for opening prisoners' eyes to new ideas and possibilities, but staff recognised that it takes a much wider network of support and resources to effectively support the desistance of individuals.

- *How do prisoners perceive the role and value of prison library services?*

The main research questions in this study could not have been answered without hearing directly from prisoners about their experiences of using library services and directly observing their engagement with the library space, programmes and events. As seen in Chapters Five and Six, perceptions of the library differed among the separate populations at each case study site. For the young men held at Hydebank, the library was ultimately seen as a place of recreation, relaxation and refuge. It was a space which facilitated self-directed learning and enabled prisoners to choose what to read and how to spend their time, which stood in contrast to the otherwise controlling and regimented nature of the prison regime. In this case study, the perception of the library was linked to prisoners' attitudes toward library staff. Both male and female participants recognised this as the best aspect of the library service. Education staff members also noted the positive rapport between staff and prisoners in the library, and the resulting mutual respect which flourished in this space. The library was also valued by prisoners as a place to exercise freedom of choice, in terms of choosing how to spend their time or whether or not to participate in the events and activities run by the library. Both male and female participants voiced their frustration at the recent changes made to the library, which had led to library visits being scheduled in the same way as education classes and thereby taking away from the "*library vibe*" (Ruby, focus group). The freedom of choice associated with the library was also recognised by library staff in Phase One of the study, who identified this as the main difference between prisoners' attitude toward library services and education classes.

The sample of research participants at Barlinnie differed greatly from the prisoners at Hydebank. Most were active participants in education courses at Barlinnie and frustrated at their lack of available access to the library. They viewed the library here as a provider of books, CDs and DVDs which both helped to broaden horizons and to pass time during incarceration. Prisoners here were mostly critical of the library space, with some reflecting on their experiences of other prison libraries. These libraries had been more similar to public libraries, where prisoners were able to spend time in the library space instead of the 15 minutes they were afforded at Barlinnie. They also ran literacy programmes and events which did not take place at Barlinnie. The nature of the library service at Barlinnie meant that the findings of the case study revealed the needs and the hopes of prisoners here rather than their current level of library engagement. This included information needs, boredom and lack of stimulation in prison and their general lack of access to sufficient library resources.

- *What informal learning opportunities are offered by the prison library?*

It was clear to see how opportunities for informal learning were available in the library space, particularly in the Hydebank case study. Both male and female prisoners had the opportunity to take part in a range of non-accredited, non-compulsory informal learning programmes or literacy events. This included weekly Reading Aloud sessions where library users could listen to a story or poem be read by a volunteer, and spend time discussing this literature. There was no pressure to participate in the activity, nor to contribute to the discussion. Other non-compulsory learning opportunities at Hydebank included Shannon Trust's "Turning Pages" peer literacy scheme, book folding activities and creative writing and poetry sessions. These kind of informal literacy programmes, activities and events also existed across the range of prison sites represented in Phase One of the study.

The library also facilitated self-study or self-directed learning experiences, where prisoners could read or watch documentaries based on their own interests rather than undertaking the reading necessary for accredited courses. The autonomy associated with this kind of informal learning in the library is also highlighted in the first phase of

research when library staff discussed the differences between prisoners' views of library services and their attitude toward more formal education. The main difference was the autonomy associated with the library space, and the lack of pressure to perform or achieve when learning is not accredited. The informal learning which takes place in the library and prisoners' perceptions of this learning should be taken more seriously by prison education researchers, as it can add further support to existing research which recognises the importance of offering non-compulsory, informal learning opportunities in prison (Behan, 2014; Warr, 2016).

- *How does the relationship between the library and education department impact upon a prisoner's experience of learning?*

A constant thread throughout both phases of this research was the level of collaboration between library and education staff and the implications of this relationship for the learning experiences of prisoners. The first phase of the study pointed to a scale of collaboration, ranging from no communication at all:

*"We are a separate department and are not included in any of the education programmes." (Respondent 16)*

*"We are never included in class planning, or with individual prisoners' learning plans." (Respondent 25)*

to some amount of liaison:

*"Provide reading materials for Storybook Dads. Occasional project work." (Respondent 20)*

*"We ask education teachers to suggest material we can stock in the library for their students to refer to during their library visits." (Respondent 13)*

to working closely with each other:

*“We work closely with them and I consider that to a large extent we share a common purpose.”* (Respondent 7)

*“We work together as a team.”* (Respondent 18)

*“I work closely with the teachers and we work well in sorting the needs of prisoners.”* (Respondent 30)

Some of the ways in which library and education staff worked together included class visits to the library to conduct research, organising informal learning events or running competitions together, working together on literacy activities such as creative writing sessions or book discussion groups, attending relevant meetings together and sharing ideas and stories of good practice. The subsequent case studies provided the opportunity to explore this relationship in more depth. It was especially insightful as the two departments worked closely together at one site (Hydebank) and had very little communication with each other at the second site (Barlinnie).

In terms of location, the library at Hydebank was located centrally within the Learning and Skills department, alongside other classrooms. This made it easy for close liaison between staff and for class visits to the library to take place. Literacy classes sometimes took place in the library and the library helped to provide resources for tutors and for staff working in vocational workshops. The librarian worked with education staff members to run poetry and art projects and competitions within the library. They attended weekly meetings together to share experiences and ideas, which meant that both library and education staff were more informed about how to support an individual in their learning journey. Being well-informed about library services meant that education staff could encourage students to attend library events, and the librarian was able to encourage participation in other education classes. The drawbacks of the setup at Hydebank has also been noted in this study. Having library sessions timetabled in the same way as education classes meant that it removed the

freedom of choice that was previously associated with library visits. It highlights the importance of being able to collaborate effectively with education classes, while still remaining separate services and spaces.

A contrasting experience was noted at HMP Barlinnie. Here, the library is located within the Communications Hub which is in a separate location from the education department. The library served more as a book-lending service, with prisoners having little time to spend in the library space during each visit. In terms of collaboration with the education department, both education staff members and prisoners spoke of the disconnect which existed between the two services. The kind of informal learning programmes which are often associated with the prison library, such as reading groups or creative writing sessions, were facilitated by the education department rather than the library. There was little noted communication between Fife College staff and the officers responsible for managing the library, although education staff recognised that their level of communication should be improved. The implications of this lack of collaboration was noted by both prisoners and staff members. It meant that there was little support from the library in terms of providing resources for education courses. Staff members had what they described as small libraries of their own in each classroom – a selection of books which their students could consult. One prisoner noted that he had to order his own copy of a book for a Higher Reading class in which he was participating as he was informed that the library had no budget for it. Focus group participants expressed an interest in having class visits to the library but their tutor pointed out that this was no longer possible because of staffing issues and heightened security in the prison. Prisoners talked about the lack of access they had to the library and the fact that choosing to participate in education classes often meant they missed the opportunity for a library visit during the day.

It seems appropriate to reiterate what is written in the Council of Europe recommendations (1990, p.34), that close cooperation between library and education staff is essential to promote the educational functions of the library. This research has shown that close cooperation can also help to build a more holistic learning experience for prisoners and provides an opportunity to learn from each other about how best to

support individual learners. It also has the potential to lessen the isolation of prison library staff members. As the findings from Phase One of the study revealed, library staff often work alone and feel that their efforts are misunderstood and undervalued by others working in the prison. Collaboration with education staff can help to counter this and to counter the already siloed nature of the prison regime.

### 8.3 Implications of desistance research

#### *Research Question 1:*

How might theories of desistance help us to better understand the outcomes of engaging with prison library services?

Desistance research has offered a language with which to discuss the value and impact of prison library services which is appropriate both to the fields of librarianship and education and, due to the growing influence of desistance research on penal policy, is also familiar to those working on prison policy and reform. This is significant, for there has long existed a tension when trying to provide library services in a setting whose principles are almost antithetical to those of librarianship. As Finlay (2018b, p.115) notes, “Incarceration inherently limits the freedom, privacy, and autonomy of individuals – three ingredients that are key to the provision of effective library services.” If prisons take seriously the move toward creating a desistance-supporting environment, this might help to ease the existing dichotomy. Finlay suggests that “the desistance model presents an opportunity, without straying from the ethical values of librarianship, to show how the prison library contributes to many of the objectives of the institution” (p.117). The discussion of findings in the previous chapter also showed how an understanding of theories of desistance helped to add further meaning to the experiences of prison library users in this study.

The framework proposed in Chapter Two was heavily informed by desistance research and was used to guide the research design and data analysis presented in this thesis. Findings have helped to refine and adapt this initial framework. The small-scale case

studies carried out at each site did not allow for full exploration of each aspect of the framework, but the previous chapter noted some of the main findings which related to the impact of library services and discussed the ways in which the interpretation of case study findings was aided by the framework. This discussion also made clear how such a framework, rooted in these theoretical constructs, could be used in future research of prison library services. In their research on prison theatre projects, Davey et. al (2015) also recognised the potential of using desistance research to show the impact of prison theatre in a criminal justice context. They proposed that by “re-positioning theatre practice in criminal justice settings within emerging alternative frameworks such as criminological theories of desistance from crime...the contribution of prison theatre to the field of criminal justice might be more readily articulated” (p.799). Following on from this and from the influence of desistance research on the evaluation of other arts-based and music programmes in prisons (for example, Anderson et al., 2011; Nickeas, 2018), this thesis has shown the ways in which library services can also benefit from such a framework to help understand and more clearly articulate their value.

#### 8.4 Prisoners’ experiences of learning

##### *Research Question 2:*

What role does the library play in the learning experiences of people in prison?

This issue has been discussed extensively throughout the thesis, particularly when considering the relationship between library services and the education department and the differing attitudes held by prisoners toward formal and informal learning experiences. The library facilitates self-directed learning, enabling prisoners to pursue existing interests or discover new ones. The informal learning opportunities provided by the prison library have the potential to help reshape attitudes about education, as well as helping prisoners to recognise “the conditions within which they can be successful” (Hopkins and Kendall, 2016, p.76). It has also been suggested that positive experiences of informal learning may eventually propel prisoners to participate in



more formalised programmes at a higher educational level (Brosens et al., 2014; Warr, 2016). For some participants, whose prior experiences of education had been mostly negative, the library provided a less intimidating learning environment and library staff were shown to encourage participation in other educational and vocational programmes taking place in the prison.

Research in the field of public librarianship has considered how libraries create social capital, especially through strengthening a sense of community and fostering a sense of trust (Vårheim, 2009; Johnson, 2012). The positive socialisation experiences noted in these studies were also evident in the prison libraries represented in this study, particularly at Hydebank. The library offered a social learning environment where interaction occurs between prisoners who may not otherwise associate with each other in the prison. Programmes such as the Reading Aloud scheme and the diversity workshops held at Hydebank during the period of fieldwork provided a safe space for open and honest interactions between the young men, helping to promote tolerance and cultural understanding. This socialisation experience offered by the library was also noted in the first phase of this study, where 42% of questionnaire respondents noted that prisoners visited the library to socialise with others.

Reflecting on current and future changes in academic libraries, Cox (2018, pp.223-224) writes, "Greater institutional focus on student success, research impact and international reputation is bringing the library into closer alignment with a wider range of collaborators on campus." In a similar way, the growing focus on supporting prisoner wellbeing and personal development and providing opportunities for change and for informal learning is bringing the prison library into closer alignment with the education department and even with the wider goals of a desistance-supporting prison. Although Cox notes the benefits of collaborating with other departments in a university (as this study has underlined the benefits of collaboration between library and education staff) he also emphasises the importance of maintaining its distinct identity (p.223). In order to do so, Cox argues that the library must clearly identify and communicate the value they bring to the institution. In a SCONUL report focused on mapping the future of academic libraries, Pinfield et al. (2017, p.42) also affirm the

need to “create and communicate a compelling vision of the library’s current and future role in the institution.” This current research on prison libraries similarly shows the need to effectively identify and communicate the value of library services in order to raise the profile of the library within the wider institution, and has put forward a way of doing so.

## 8.5 Recommendations for future research

This project took an interdisciplinary approach to exploring the potential value and impact of prisoners’ engagement with library services. The theoretical framework guiding the research was heavily informed by theories of desistance along with informal learning theories and critical librarianship. It has been reiterated throughout this study that the framework serves as a foundation for future research and it is hoped that it can be used to build a stronger evidence base of the value of prison library services. This study therefore encourages further research into prisoners’ experiences of using library services to help refine and adapt this initial framework. The findings of this study have shown the importance of finding an appropriate way to discuss the impact of prison library engagement so that services are no longer overlooked or undervalued within the wider prison regime or future prison policies. It has been argued that qualitative research is essential in capturing the experiences of prisoners who engage with library services and the case studies presented in this thesis have offered a way of understanding these experiences.

The small-scale case studies in this research and resulting small sample of prisoner participants was a noted limitation of this research. This is particularly true of the Hydebank case study, where very few female participants were interviewed about their experiences of the prison library. Further research on women’s experiences of using library services is recommended, as this is a population who are often overlooked both within prison policy and prison research. It is further recommended that future case studies involve interviewing former prisoners, as this could reveal the

ways in which library engagement during incarceration impacted on their life since leaving prison.

One of the main findings to emerge from this study was the importance of the physical library space within the prison and how the design of a library impacts upon the kind of learning activities and social interactions that can take place here. This in turn impacted upon the general environment cultivated within the library, and how the library was perceived by prisoners. Along with existing positive associations with public library spaces, this social dimension of the library space contributed to an understanding of the library as *place*. The case study at Hydebank revealed the library to be particularly important as a place of refuge for young men and for those experiencing incarceration for the first time, and somewhere that open and honest conversations could take place without fear of judgement or repercussions. Participants in Barlinnie were frustrated that they were not allowed to spend more time in the library space, and spoke of previous positive experiences of using the library space in other prisons. There is scope for future research which focuses more specifically on prisoners' engagement with the space of the library and their perceptions of the library as place, incorporating ideas from Crewe et al.'s research on the emotional geography of prison life (2014). This is particularly important within the field of prison education, when considering the importance of space in experiences of both individual and social learning. This research has shown the need for interdisciplinary research in this area and recommends collaboration between library and education researchers to conduct more comprehensive, interdisciplinary research which would benefit both areas of research and practice.

Prisoners in this study spoke about their lack of access to technology and to online resources and staff members alluded to the challenges involved with providing online access. Research has already been published on the digital exclusion faced by prisoners and the potential of computers and online access to transform education in prisons (see Pike and Adams, 2012; Champion and Edgar, 2013; Jewkes and Reisdorf, 2016; Reisdorf and Rikard, 2018). Further research could be carried out on the digital literacy needs of library users and the potential of libraries to facilitate online access. This is

particularly important for students taking part in Higher Education courses, whose studies are affected by the lack of access to online resources which would improve their understanding of subject material and offer learning experiences more akin to those of students outside prison. It is recommended that research be carried out which explores current initiatives to facilitate this access for students undertaking Higher Education courses and the potential role of libraries in supporting this level of education, building on the work of Sorgert (2014) and DeVanos (2017).

In each of these research areas, it is recommended that prisoners and other potential research participants be involved with the design of the research approach and methods of data collection.

#### 8.6 Implications for policy and practice at case study sites

The close working relationship between the library and education department at Hydebank is to be commended, and the positive implications of staff liaison is well-documented in this study. However, findings also revealed concerns about changes made to library access during the transition of Hydebank into a Secure College. Library sessions began to be timetabled alongside other education classes, with prisoners expected to attend either morning or afternoon sessions lasting between 2-3 hours. These sessions are compulsory to attend, removing the freedom of choice previously associated with library visits. These changes were a point of contention for point staff and prisoners. The library was also referred to as a “*dumping ground*” for prisoners whose timetables were full or when classes were cancelled. It is recommended that those responsible for education provision and timetable management at Hydebank reconsider this current practice. This study has made clear that one of the main attractions of the library is the autonomy it offers individuals and the fact that library attendance and participation in library programmes and events is entirely voluntary. Making it mandatory for prisoners to spend lengthy periods of time in the library removes this element of freedom and has the potential to create further reluctance to participate in the informal learning programmes offered by the library.

The Scottish Prison Service has recently purchased land on which to build a replacement prison for HMP Barlinnie, expected to be opened in 2025 (SPS, 2019). Findings from this research can help to inform plans for a new library space, but also to inform changes to practice in the current library before this building development takes place. It is clear from this study that prisoners were frustrated by the lack of access they had to the library space and the fact that library access was inconsistent among different groups of prisoners. It is recommended that the length of time allocated for library visits be extended, as both staff and prisoners confirmed that current visits lasted only 15 minutes. This was not considered a long enough period of time to browse the shelves for books, CDs and DVDs or to meet prisoners' information needs. In extending the length of these visits, the library would adhere to IFLA's recommendation that:

“[prisoners] should be able to visit the library every week for periods sufficiently long to select and check out materials, ask reference questions, order interlibrary loan items, read materials that do not circulate, and participate in cultural activities organized by the library.” (Lehmann and Locke, 2005, p.7)

The library here was seen simply as a space to borrow resources, rather than a space in which to spend time reading or relaxing. Prisoner participants spoke more positively about their experiences in other prison libraries which were seen as both educational and recreational spaces, similar to that of a public library space. It is therefore recommended that careful planning goes into either changing the library space at the current site, or into creating the library space at a new prison site. Prisoners also lamented that a number of literacy events or programmes such as Storybook Dads and the Shannon Trust's peer literacy scheme, which used to be facilitated by the library, no longer take place at Barlinnie. It was noted that reading groups and author events do take place through the education department, but this meant that only prisoners participating in education classes could attend. As this study has shown the benefits of providing non-compulsory, informal learning opportunities for people in prison, and

the potential for these programmes to mitigate prior negative learning experiences, it is important for all prisoners to have access to such programmes and events. These may be better facilitated by qualified library professionals instead of library officers. This was another issue which was apparent in each phase of the research project. The Hydebank case study showed the advantages of employing a qualified librarian, who was viewed differently from prison officers and was generally trusted by those visiting the prison library. In line with existing library policy guidelines (Lehmann and Locke, 2005; Krolak, 2019) and the findings of this study, it is recommended that qualified library staff be employed to manage library services at HMP Barlinnie.

The lack of effective communication methods and access to reliable and relevant information was another significant finding in the second case study. This is something which must be addressed by the prison as a whole, but there is also an important role to be played by the library in facilitating access to reliable and timely information. There was clearly confusion among prisoners about the process of ordering books into the prison, and prisoners were often not aware of the services offered by the library, such as the Inside Outside scheme run by Glasgow Life. Library staff should consider ways of promoting these services and ensuring that all prisoners have access to the same information and guidelines related to library services.

A final recommendation for Barlinnie is to facilitate opportunities for collaboration between library and education staff. The positive implications of such liaison was a main finding of this study, and both prisoners and teaching staff at Barlinnie expressed the need for a stronger relationship between the two. It is recommended that the library be centrally located within the wider education department at the new prison site, as this would enable closer cooperation and more regular class visits to the library without the pressure of staff having to escort prisoners to different areas of the prison. It is also recommended that library and education staff meet together regularly to share ideas and good practice stories or to plan collaborative projects and literacy programmes, as was evidenced at Hydebank.

For both prisons, it is recommended that the relevant staff members and policy stakeholders carry out service evaluations or gather further feedback from prisoners about current library provision, information and education needs and ideas for future change when making decisions about service development.

## 8.7 Conclusion

This research set out to improve understanding of prisoners' experiences of using library services during incarceration. It builds on the work of Stevens (1995) who explored the role of the library in the rehabilitation process in the UK and Garner (2017, 2019) who studied prisoners' experiences of library services in Australia. This study took further steps in developing a theoretical framework to deepen understanding of the benefits of engagement with library services. This framework was informed largely by desistance research and informal learning theories, and underpinned by aspects of critical librarianship. Taking a qualitative, multi-method approach, the study explored the perceptions and experiences of both prisoners and prison library staff to provide a comprehensive account of library engagement. An initial survey of prison library staff provided a broad and contemporary overview of prison library provision across the UK and Ireland. Two subsequent case studies allowed for more in-depth examination of prisoner engagement and how the social context of the prison environment impacted upon provision of and engagement with library services. These case studies were also concerned with exploring the informal learning opportunities facilitated by the prison library and the relationship between library and education staff in supporting the learning experience of prisoners.

The conclusions of this thesis arrive at a time when the purpose and direction of prison education are being widely discussed in the UK, Ireland and across Europe, and when research activity in this area is thriving. It is also a time when critical librarianship is being taken seriously on a global level. Drabinski (2019, p.51) describes this developing interest in critical librarianship as "a persistent longing for a librarianship that looks and acts in ways that disrupts the status quo, that center a commitment to

social justice and social change, that elevate and amplify a diverse group of librarians and that grapple directly with the problem of power concentrated in the hands of only a few.” Such a librarianship would make visible the plight of prison library professionals, who often work in isolation to bring information services to a population deprived of power and liberty. There is much potential for the knowledge and experiences of both library and education researchers and practitioners to be harnessed and used to produce more theoretically informed research and strengthen collaboration between the two fields. UNESCO’s recent publication, *Books beyond bars: the transformative role of prison libraries* (Krolak, 2019), also shows a growing conversation around the power and potential of literature and libraries in prisons, cementing the need for further research and evidence-based policy changes in this area.

This study has contributed to the small amount of existing empirical research on prisoners’ experiences of engagement with library services and has provided previously unexplored accounts of library service provision in Northern Ireland and Scotland. It has also drawn together theories and research from the fields of both prison education and prison librarianship, which have long remained separate fields of research. In this sense, it makes an original contribution not only to the field of librarianship but also to that of prison education research. Findings of the study offer a strong argument for increasing current levels of liaison between prison education and library staff as well as recommending future collaboration between prison education and library researchers to provide a more thorough understanding of the overall learning needs and experiences of people in prison. As theories of desistance continue to develop and to influence penal policy, it is imperative that the role of the library in supporting an individual’s journey of change is understood and included in prison policy discussions. The unique theoretical model proposed in this research offers a holistic guide for undertaking future research in this area and demonstrating the potential impact of engaging with library services.



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## Appendix A: Questionnaire for prison library staff



### ***A new paradigm for prison library services? Exploring the role of the library in the lives of incarcerated individuals.***

You are being invited to take part in a PhD research project at Ulster University about the provision of library services to incarcerated individuals and their families. The purpose of this study is to uncover the range of library services available to this population within the UK and Ireland, and to gain a better understanding of how these services contribute to the wellbeing and desistance of offenders. As an active prison library staff member, your responses will help to uncover what services exist and how they are delivered.

This questionnaire will consist of 25 short questions across four sections, including:

- Introductory details about your institution and job role
- An overview of the library services in your institution
- The library's relationship with the education department
- Your perspectives of the purpose and outcomes of library services.

It should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the questionnaire at any point. Your answers will remain confidential, and you will not be identified in this research or any subsequent publications which stem from this research. All data will be stored on a password-protected server. The final page will ask for your email address if you are willing to take part in a follow-up interview, but this will not be used for anything other than follow-up communication by the researcher. If you choose not to provide an email address, the questionnaire will remain fully anonymous.

This project has received funding by the Department for Economics (DfE), in conjunction with Ulster University. It is being supervised by Dr Jessica Bates ([j.bates@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:j.bates@ulster.ac.uk)) and Dr Tracy Irwin ([t.irwin@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:t.irwin@ulster.ac.uk)) and has received ethical approval from Ulster University's Ethics Committee. If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please contact the lead researcher, Jayne Finlay, at [finlay-j16@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:finlay-j16@ulster.ac.uk).

#### **Consent**

Choosing to complete this questionnaire shows that you have read and agree with the statements below:

- a) I have read and understood the information above.
- b) I currently work as a library staff member in a UK or Ireland based institution.
- c) I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and I am able to withdraw from the study at any point without providing a reason.
- d) I understand that I will remain anonymous throughout the research project, and that my information will be stored securely and not shared with anyone outside the research team.
- e) I agree to take part in this study.

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.**



## Section 1: Your Institution and Job Role

*Please underline answers where relevant.*

**1. In which region is your institution?**

England/Wales

Scotland

Northern Ireland

The Republic of Ireland

**2. What category of prison do you work in?**

**3. Is your prison:**

A public sector prison

Privately managed

**4. What is your job title?**

**5. Do you hold a postgraduate librarianship/LIS qualification?**

Yes

No

**6. How many FTE (full-time equivalent) staff members work in your library?**



**7. Is the library in your prison managed by:**

The local public library authority

A local education provider

The prison

*Other (please specify):*

**Section 2: Overview of Library Services**

**8. What do you consider to be the overall objective of the prison library?**

**9. In your opinion, what is the main reason individuals use the library? (You may underline more than one answer):**

It is simply part of their timetable.

To escape from the prison environment.

To borrow books.

To find legal information.

To participate in informal learning programmes.

To socialise with others.

*Other (please specify):*

**10. Does your library offer any of the following? (Underline all that apply):**

Book discussion groups

Author events



Creative writing groups

Family literacy schemes eg. Storybook Dads

Peer learning programmes eg. Turning Pages

**11. Please note any other educational or recreational activities facilitated by your library:**

**12. Is it possible to access online resources or programmes through a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) in the library?**

Yes

No

*Please add further detail if you wish:*

**13. Do you have incarcerated individuals working as orderlies in your library?**

Yes

No

**14. Is there a prison officer present in the library when individuals are using the space?**

Yes

No

Sometimes



15. Please mark with an 'x' the extent to which you agree/disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Undecided	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Library resources are sufficient to meet the needs of this prison's population.					
Individuals have sufficient access to IT in the library.					
The library is seen as an important resource by: <i>Senior Management</i>					
The library is seen as an important resource by: <i>Prison officers</i>					
The library is seen as an important resource by: <i>Education staff</i>					
The library is seen as an important resource by: <i>Incarcerated individuals</i>					

16. Do you work closely with local public libraries for any of the following (underline all that apply):

Development of library policy.

Provision of resources.

Delivery of literacy or reader development programmes.

Re-entry initiatives.

None of the above.

*Other (please specify):*



**17. Are library users encouraged to use public libraries when released from prison?**

Yes

Somewhat

No

*Please add further detail if you wish:*

### **Section 3: Relationship with the education department**

**18. Is the library considered to be part of the education department in the prison?**

Yes

No

*Please add further detail if you wish:*

**19. Do you consider the library to be part of the education department?**

Yes

No

*Please add further detail if you wish:*

**20. How closely do you liaise with education staff about supporting the needs of incarcerated individuals?**

Always

Often

Sometimes

Rarely

Never



Please provide an example if you have liaised with education staff:

**21. In your opinion, do the attitudes of prisoners toward the library differ from attitudes toward education classes?**

Yes

No

Please explain your answer:

#### Section 4: The purpose and value of library services

**22. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the *purpose* of library services in your institution? Please mark your answer with an 'x' in the relevant box.**

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Undecided	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
The prison library is purely recreational.					
The library exists to support the education and literacy needs of incarcerated individuals.					
The main purpose of the library is to provide free access to information.					
The library plays an important role in the rehabilitation of those who use it.					
The library offers individuals a constructive use of time.					
The library offers an important <i>space</i> for individuals within the prison environment.					





**23. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the *outcomes* of library services in your institution? Please mark your answer with an 'x' in the relevant box.**

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Undecided	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
The library helps to improve literacy and education levels of incarcerated individuals.					
Participation in informal learning programmes facilitated by the library can act as a bridge to participation in other education and vocational classes/activities.					
Frequent use of the library improves the social skills of individuals in prison.					
Library programmes can have a positive impact on family relationships.					
Participation in informal learning programmes can increase the confidence and self-esteem of individuals.					
Library services have the potential to offer hope and motivation for change.					
The library helps to expose individuals to different cultures and ideas.					

**24. In your view, can engagement with library services in your institution positively contribute to an individual's journey of desistance from crime?**

Yes

No

Somewhat

Don't know



*Please explain your answer:*

**25. Have you any additional comments about the purpose or outcomes of prison library services?**

### **Thank you!**

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please return by email to [finlay-j16@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:finlay-j16@ulster.ac.uk). If you would be happy to be contacted by the researcher for a follow-up interview about the library in which you work, please enter your email address in the space below (this will remain confidential, only to be used by the researcher).

Alternatively, please confirm your interest by contacting the lead researcher, Jayne Finlay, at [finlay-j16@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:finlay-j16@ulster.ac.uk).

## Appendix B: Interview schedules

*A sample of interview schedules are provided here. One is the topic guide for prison library staff interviews and one is the topic guide for prisoner interviews.*

### **Interview Schedule: Prison library staff**

#### *Library policy and management:*

- 1) Can you tell me about your job title and role at [prison site]?
- 2) Who is responsible for governing, staffing and financing the library?
- 3) Does the library have any written policies, such as a collection development policy?
- 4) How does the library fit into the Learning and Skills Department and the wider prison structure?
- 5) Can you tell me about the relationship between this library and the local public library authority?
- 6) Have you seen many changes to the way the library is run, as policies across the [NIPS/SPS] have changed in recent years?

#### *Access to library services:*

- 7) How often can prisoners access the library?
- 8) Do you think that prisoners currently have sufficient access to the library and its resources?
- 9) How are library services provided to vulnerable persons or others who may not be able to access the physical library?
- 10) Are there any other challenges preventing individuals from accessing library services?
- 11) Why might some individuals choose not to engage with library services?

#### *Resources provided by library:*

- 12) Can you give me a brief overview of the resources offered by the library?
- 13) Who is responsible for choosing library stock?

- 14) What access do prisoners have to IT and online resources?
- 15) How satisfied are you that the library budget is sufficient to maintain an efficient library service?

*Literacy programmes:*

- 16) Can you give me an overview of the recreational and literacy programmes offered by the library?
- 17) Who facilitates these programmes? (eg. library staff/public library staff/volunteers)
- 18) How are these programmes promoted within the prison?
- 19) How do you feel about levels of participation in these programmes?
- 20) Can you tell me about the level of communication between library and education staff in the prison?
- 21) What role do you think the library plays in the educational experiences of prisoners?

*Purpose and impact*

- 22) What do you see as the key objectives of the library?
- 23) How do you feel the library is viewed by other staff members?
- 24) In your opinion, how do prisoners view the library?
- 25) In what ways, if any, do you think libraries can help individuals during release and resettlement?
- 26) What do you see as the main challenges of providing this service?
- 27) Are any evaluations carried out on the library services in your institution? Are you under any pressure to show the outcomes of library services?
- 28) Are there any changes you would like to see in the provision of library services to people in prison?
- 29) What do you see as the *best* thing about the service you provide?

**Conclusion.**

## Topic guide for prisoner interviews:

### 1) Personal Information

- Chosen pseudonym
- Family situation – partner, child?
- How long have you been in prison?
- How long is left of your sentence?
- Have you been in prison before?
- General wellbeing during incarceration

### 2) Experience of education prior to imprisonment

- Level of education.
- View of school/education before imprisonment.
- Use of library before prison.
- Reading for pleasure.
- IT and information seeking skills.

### 3) Experience of education during imprisonment

- Participation in education classes.
- Other vocational activities and qualifications.
- How have they found these experiences?
- How does it compare to experience of education before prison?
- Do you have any educational goals during incarceration?
- Are you likely to continue education on release?

### 4) Experience of the prison library (space, resources, programmes)

- Frequency of access.
- What do you use library for? (Or why do you *not* use the library)
- What does the library mean to you?
- View of the library *space*.
- Experience of reading for pleasure.
- Comparison of participation in education classes.
- Rapport with library staff.

### 5) Hopes for post-imprisonment

- Education/vocational aspirations once released.
- Has library helped in any of this?
- Has library played a role in maintaining social and family relationships?
- Are you likely to use the public library when released?
- What is the best thing the library offers?

## Appendix C: Focus group guide

*Welcome participants and give an overview of the research project. Read the information sheet, answer any questions about the research and ask for informed consent. Explain the purpose of this focus group and how it will be carried out.*

- 1) Introductory statements (Ask for students' names and discuss chosen pseudonyms).
- 2) Do you usually use the library? Why/why not?
- 3) How did you hear about this programme/event and why did you choose to participate in it?
- 4) What did you hope to get out of it?
- 5) Do you think you achieved this objective? Why/why not?
- 6) Did you know everyone in the group before participating?
- 7) What did you enjoy the most about this programme?
- 8) What did you enjoy the least?
- 9) How does this differ from work you might do in education classes?
- 10) Did you learn anything new about yourself during the programme?
- 11) Would you recommend using library services to others after participating in this programme?
- 12) Are you likely to use the library more or less after participating in this programme?
- 13) What kind of activities or programmes would you offer if you ran the library?
- 14) Any closing comments prisoners would like to make, relevant to the discussion.

*Summary of focus group discussion. Thank participants for their contribution to the discussion.*

## Appendix D: Participant observation template

### Participant observation of library programme

*Location:*

*Date:*

*Programme being observed:*

*Setting:*

- Who is present? (staff/prisoners/researcher)
- How many prisoners are participating in the activity?
- Note range of ages/nationalities etc.
- How is the room set out for this group?
- What resources are used?

*Process:*

- What book is being discussed?
- What format does the discussion take? (librarian-led or general discussion)
- How long does the activity last?
- Are there any interruptions during the activity e.g. due to issues in the rest of the prison?

*Engagements and interactions:*

- Why did individuals choose to take part in this group (was it optional or a compulsory part of their daily timetable?)
- How did participants respond to the book in question?
- Did the discussion of the book lead to conversations about related issues in their own lives or their current situation in prison?
- What levels of literacy appeared to be present in the group?
- How did participants relate to the prison librarian or volunteer?
- How did participants interact with each other?
- Did the librarian/volunteer have to facilitate conversation throughout, or did participants show initiative of asking their own questions to each other?
- Was there any obvious change in mood during the observation?

## Appendix E: Observation accounts

### **Participant observation of Reading Aloud programme, Hydebank**

*Location:* Library, Hydebank

*Date:* 26 September 2018

*Programme being observed:* Reading Aloud

[For the purpose of anonymity, I have changed the name of the volunteer who runs this shared reading programme. She will be referred to as “Laura” in this reflection.]

Reading Aloud is a shared reading programme which takes place every Wednesday at Hydebank, during the morning library sessions timetabled for the young men. A volunteer from an organisation called the Reader visits the library to read a short story or a poem aloud, encouraging the young men to share thoughts and feelings provoked by the reading.

I arrive at the library just as the Reading Aloud session is about to begin. The library is noisy and full of life when I walk in, with 8 young men present along with Laura and the prison librarian. Five of these young men are sitting around a table in the centre of the library with the volunteer, ready to listen to the story or short poem. Another prisoner is sitting in his usual chair near the librarian’s desk, sorting through piles of paper. I later learn that he is sorting through printed copies of short stories which have been told by Laura in the past. He asked the librarian if he could have copies of these stories to read again. The librarian tells me, “He really likes the short stories, because his attention span may not be long enough for longer books.” Two other prisoners are sitting toward the back of the library – one is reading a book and the other is reading something on one of the tablets which been lent to the library by Libraries NI for a trial period. I am told by the librarian that not everyone who is timetabled to be in the library at this time has to take part in the shared reading activity – participation is voluntary.



The short story chosen by Laura this week is called the “The Snob” and is about a man who is ashamed to introduce his wealthy, somewhat “posh” new girlfriend to his “plain” family. Laura reaches a part of the story where the couple bumps into his dad in a bookshop and the son acts as though he hasn’t seen him because he is ashamed. Laura takes a break at this point to ask the men questions about the story. She asks, “What do you think the dad is feeling?” and “why do you think the son is embarrassed?” One of the men, who I have spoken to before and I know has severe mental health issues, engages well with this story and talks a lot, to the point that he has to be interrupted to see if anyone else wants to speak. (At the end of this session, the librarian tells me that he went to a mental health check-up appointment and talked about how much he enjoyed these Reading Aloud sessions so the senior officer asked the librarian more about it. This officer took books from the library to read out loud to him because he realised that this worked well to get him engaged and also simply to calm him down.) Another participant spoke heatedly about how angry he would be at the son for treating his dad like that – “I’m not the best son but I wouldn’t do that, and I’m angry because what I wouldn’t give to hang out with my dad instead of being stuck in here.” Two participants were silent during this time and simply sat with their legs up on the table, ready for Laura to start the story again. One chips in, “right guys, can we just get back to it and see what happens.”

The session is interrupted at this point by a couple of prisoners who had been baking in the cookery class and burst in to the library loudly brandishing the brownies they have made. This makes the Reading Aloud participants jump up and try to grab the brownies and completely disrupts the session. There are rules against eating in the library and the librarian has to raise her voice and speak sternly to them, telling them to wrap up and save the brownies to eat on their break and for the others to go back to their cookery class. This completely changes the mood in the library, with the men seeming annoyed at the librarian and it takes a while for them to be calmed down and start the story again. During the next part of the discussion, the two men who had been sitting reading at the back of the library start to chip in with answers, shouting out from behind the bookshelves. It was clear they had been listening along to the story even if they weren’t sitting around the table with everybody. It took a while for

everyone to calm down and be less noisy following the disruption, but it was clear that the volunteer was used to these kind of incidents and was very capable of handling it and bringing their attention back to the story. It was also very clear that the men respected Laura and enjoyed these sessions – when she packed up to leave, most of the participants thanked her and started shouting out suggestions about what kind of stories they would like to hear the following week.

I spoke with Laura before she left, and she noted that she would be happy to be interviewed the next time she was visiting to take a Reading Aloud session. She was evidently very passionate about this work, and I learn that she volunteers with a group in the library at HMP Maghaberry as well. She tells me how she would usually have time to read a poem as well after their break but with the interruptions and the discussions today she had run out of time. I also spoke with some of the participants before they left for lunch, and asked one of them if he would be happy to be interviewed for my study to tell me more about this programme and about how he uses the library (I had already explained to this group what my research was about and why I was present in the library). He still seems a bit suspicious when I mention the word interview, asking what exactly it will involve. When I say that it will be very informal and the questions will all be based around his experiences of education and using the library at Hydebank he says, “ah that’s ok then miss, no problem” and is willing to be interviewed the following day.

### **Participant observation of induction class, HMP Barlinnie**

*Location:* Classroom in education department at HMP Barlinnie

*Date:* 23 October 2018

*Programme being observed:* Induction to Education

Every prisoner at HMP Barlinnie has to complete an induction and be involved with the education department within two weeks of being processed. I am told by the tutor that they have three chances to attend the induction and if not, you are struck off

from the opportunity. The tutor who leads these induction classes is employed by Fife College. She works with the Open University and with distance learning students, visiting the cells of prisoners who undertake Open University courses and checking how they are getting on with their studies. She also prints any online information they need. Outside of this, she helps to carry out induction classes with students.

There are ten students in the class who are sitting around one large table in the centre of the classroom. There are a range of ages and ethnicities represented among the students – one student could speak very little English. The tutor switches on a TV in the corner of the room which plays radio hits throughout the duration of the class, which creates a slightly more relaxed and informal classroom environment. The tutor informs me that there are TVs in every classroom and when, for example, football or tennis tournaments are on TV, these will be shown in the classrooms.

The tutor hands out an initial form for each student to note their name and prisoner number and sign to say that they have read the education policy. Each student is then asked to fill out a literacy and numeracy test to assess their current level of education. The student who is unable to speak English is given an ESOL version of this sheet, to assess his level of English. There is some chat during this time but no sharing of answers – mostly exclamations of how easy or difficult people are finding the questions. The tutor walks around the table and answers any questions about the tests. One older prisoner pushes the sheet away in frustration and says that he cannot read or write. The tutor makes a note of this and helps him to fill out his initial form. Another student tells us how he was a university student before he got sentenced and wants to know if he is able to continue his degree. The tutor explains that it might be possible, but he must wait until February before that process can take place. He seems put out by this and the tutor reassures him that she will speak to him separately to explain the process. Another student comments, “Sorry if I don’t answer these questions well, it’s cos I’m locked up in my cell all the time and it messes with my head.”

When the tests are complete, the students begin to ask me questions about my research. This leads to one prisoner commenting that the library here has no books that he wants. "I requested a Tom Smith book when I was in here four years ago and they still haven't got it for me!" He also tells the class how he tried to order books in from the outside but wasn't allowed. Another student advises him how to go about this, for he says the policy has changed and it is possible to do that now. This student goes on to complain that "there are too many True Crime books in the library. You need to get them to buy other things – it messes with their minds in here." The popularity of these books was later confirmed when I was given a tour of the library. The library officer told me that Glasgow Life had given them 500 True Crime titles but "you won't find any of them on the shelves because they've all been taken out."

I also learn from this class conversation that the education department is the only place where the different Halls (wings) mix, for they are escorted everywhere else in their Halls, such as the library and the workshops. The only prisoners who do not mix are E-Hall (sex offenders) and other mainstream prisoners. One student shouts out, "So many forms man!" in frustration, but the tutor reassures him that this is the only class where they will have to spend so much time filling out forms and "then the fun can begin in the education department."

The tutor then explains to students what is available in the education department and how they sign up for different classes. There is a form to indicate what classes they would like to take part in. She also lets the students know that if they have filled out these sheets previously, been released, but reconvicted within one year, then they do not have to fill out these sheets again. The students are given a Personal Development Plan (PDP), to indicate what their educational experiences and interests are, and what they hope to achieve whilst in prison. The tutor will then visit each individual six months later to look through these plans and discuss what they have achieved. Most of the class seem interested in starting education classes, with one commenting that it will "finally give me something to do."

The class lasts from 1.30pm to 3pm. I am told that the usual afternoon classes usually last an extra 45 minutes but this is slightly shorter as it is part of an induction. As the students are leaving they make some final comments to me about the library. One says that it's terrible and he hasn't been able to access it in weeks. Another agrees, "Yep, access is the big problem." Another student shows a lot of interest in my research and says he would be very happy to be interviewed. I let students know that I will be carrying out individual interviews over the coming week and that it would be great if they are able and willing to participate in these, to find out more about their perceptions of the library. Students leave and have to be escorted back to their Halls by the prison officers stationed in the education department.

I have a final conversation with the tutor before we part ways. I comment that the library and education department seem to be quite separate at Barlinnie. She points out that the library is part of the "Communications Hub" where students are taught a Communications module by one of the Fife College tutors, so that is somewhat of a link. She also notes that there are books in every classroom, pointing to a small selection of books she has in the corner of this classroom. I am able to stay in this classroom when the tutor leaves, to write up my observation notes.

## Appendix F: Information sheets

*A sample of information sheets are provided here – one for prison library staff interviews and one for prisoner interviews.*

### **Information Sheet: Library staff interviews**

**Study Title:** *A new paradigm for prison library services? Exploring the role of the library in the lives of incarcerated individuals.*

You are being invited to take part in a PhD research study at Ulster University. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important to understand what this research is for and what you will be asked to do. Please read the following information and feel free to ask any questions you might have. Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this research.

#### **What is the purpose of this study?**

The purpose of this study is to uncover the range of library services available to individuals both during incarceration and resettlement, and to gain a better understanding of how library users engage with these services. This study will test a theoretical model about the outcomes of using the library, which can later be used by staff and policymakers to examine the benefits of their services. It is hoped that the results of this study will have positive implications for the development of future prison library policy.

#### **Why have I been chosen?**

You have been chosen to take part in this study because of your role as a prison library staff member. I value your professional insight about library services and the role they play in the lives of incarcerated individuals. Your input will give me a broader understanding of the prison library services that exist in the UK and Ireland.

#### **Do I have to take part?**

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary and it is up to you whether or not to take part. If you choose to take part, you can change your mind at any time and withdraw from the study without giving a reason.

#### **What do I have to do?**

If you choose to take part, I will carry out a semi-structured interview with you either via telephone or in the prison library. This interview will last between 30-45 minutes and involve questions about prison library policy and management, the range of informal learning programmes facilitated by the library, how users engage with the library space and resources, and the role played by the library in preparing individuals for release. This interview will be digitally recorded (if permitted) and later transcribed by the researcher. I will provide you with this information sheet beforehand, and ask you to sign a consent form to take part.

**Are there any benefits in taking part?**

I am interested in the future development of library services for incarcerated individuals. The results of this study can be used to inform the direction of future library policy and provide recommendations for practice. It is hoped that this will have a positive impact on the provision of library services and ultimately on the lives of incarcerated individuals.

**Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**

Your real name will not be used in this study, and no other information will be used that might identify you. This project is independent of the prison service or any other government agency, and no personal data or responses will be shared with the prison service. Once interview recordings have been transcribed by the researcher, they will be deleted. Transcribed data will be stored on a password-protected computer, accessible only by the researcher.

**What will happen to the results of the study?**

The results of this study will be published as a PhD thesis and held by Ulster University. They will be accessible by future students and other researchers. All or parts of this research may be published separately in academic journal articles or conference proceedings. You will not be identified in any future report or publication.

**Who is organising and funding the research?**

This research is funded by the Department for the Economy (DfE), in conjunction with Ulster University.

**Who has reviewed this study?**

The project has been reviewed by my two supervisors, both of whom have relevant knowledge in the subject area, and has been approved by Ulster University's Ethics Committee.

**Contact Details:**

Jayne Finlay

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Should you wish to speak to anyone other than myself about the study you may contact either of my supervisors:

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## **Information Sheet: Prisoner interviews**

This is part of a PhD study about the value of prison libraries. This information will tell you more about the project and you can ask any questions you might have. You do not have to take part, but it would be great to hear your views about the library.

### **What is the study about?**

This study looks at the role of the library in the lives of people in prison. It will help me to understand the different reasons why people use the library, and how library services could be developed and improved.

### **What do I have to do?**

If you choose to take part, I will have an informal interview with you for about half an hour. You will be asked to sign a consent form before the interview begins. We will talk about:

- Your experience of using the library
- Your experience of education before and during incarceration
- Your hopes for release and the future

### **Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**

Yes. Anything you say to the interviewer will be completely confidential and no one else will be told what you say. There are only 3 reasons why I might have to pass on what you say:

- If someone else is threatening, bullying or abusing you.
- If you plan to harm yourself or someone else.
- If you tell me you plan to break prison rules, or attempt to escape.

You will be told if I decide to report this to a prison staff member.

You will not be identified in this research. Your name will be changed, and you can choose which name you are given. If you decide after the interview takes place that you no longer want to be included in the study, you should tell a member of library staff within one month following the interview. They will get in touch with me and ask me to withdraw your information from my study.

### **Who is organising and funding this research?**

This is part of a PhD project supported by Ulster University, and funded by the Department for Economy.

*Jayne Finlay  
PhD Student  
Ulster University*





## Consent Form: Prisoner interviews

Jayne Finlay has explained to me what this research is about and why I was asked to be interviewed.

- I know what this research is about.
- I have had the chance to ask questions about the research.
- I know I don't have to take part if I don't want to.
- If I change my mind during the interview and don't want to be involved, I know I can stop and anything that was written down will be destroyed.
- I know my real name will not be used at all during this research.
- I know that my answers are confidential unless there is reason to believe that either I or someone else may be in danger.
- I know that I can tell a library staff member if I have any concerns about the research or what I said during the interview, or if I decide I don't want my answers to be used (until one month after the research has taken place).

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date

## Appendix H: Case study codebooks and axial coding

## Hydebank Codebook

Code	Description	Example from data
Staff rapport – officers	Any reference (positive, negative, neutral) made by prisoners about their rapport with prison officers, or references made by staff members about the prisoner-officer rapport which exists in the prison, or observation of this rapport during the fieldwork period.	<i>They are bringing in a lot of new officers though that's a big difference, they're all younger. I dunno...it's ok. I wouldn't say anything bad about them.</i>
Staff rapport – library staff	Any reference made by prisoner or staff member about the rapport between prisoners and library officers.	<i>I'd say it's [the librarian]. She's great – no one has a bad word to say about her. I don't think we'd want to be in the library so much if she wasn't there. I think most people would say the same.</i>
Access to library	Any reference made to level of library access, time spent in library and barriers to library access.	<i>But that's not to say everyone gets to access the library! I wasn't able to get here for ages. It's usually the way that the ones who want to come can't get to it, and the ones who don't care so much are made to come.</i>
Access to education	Any reference made to levels of access to education and how prison environment and routine impacts upon this access.	<i>Yeah, back in 2016 there weren't so many classes. There was the English and maths and then stuff like bricks and plumbing. Now there's loads.</i>
Literacy levels	Any reference made by staff or prisoners to the literacy level of prisoners at Hydebank, or observation of prisoners' literacy skills.	<i>I'd say only about 5 people in this whole place like reading. Half of us can't read. I couldn't read when I came in. Then I did a literacy thing that helped.</i>
Library as recreational	Any reference made to the library as providing a recreational space or recreational resources for prisoners.	<i>You've seen what we come in here for most! People know us as the book ladies, we're always making these books.</i>
Library as escape	Any reference made to library as a place of 'escape' within the prison or to the resources provided by the library offering some 'escape' to prisoners.	<i>I think for me it's just taking a break. I like coming here. It's a break from work and classes.</i>
Library as refuge	Any reference made to the library as a place of refuge or 'safe space' for prisoners, or observation of prisoners using library as safe space.	<i>I was told that when he first came in, he wouldn't leave the library. He didn't want to mix with the others and he spent weeks sitting in the library and not participating in other classes.</i>

Library as “dumping ground”	Any reference made by staff or prisoners to the library as being treated as a “dumping ground” for students who either do not fit into the timetable or whose classes have been cancelled.	<i>Sometimes people are just kind of deposited in here because they don't know where else to put them, and it's clear they don't want to be here. That's frustrating, because I don't want this to be something that's forced on them, I want it to be a choice and something they enjoy.</i>
Library as boring	Any description of the library or its activities/programmes as being boring and not something in which they want to participate.	<i>I mean I have been in the library, but it's just not something for me. I'd be too bored in it. And I know I'd mess about.</i>
Library as place to clear head	Any description of the library space as a place for prisoners to “clear their head” temporarily.	<i>And just to chat to [the librarian]. Clears your head a bit being here sometimes.</i>
Library as “your time”	Any reference made by prisoners about library visits being “your time” or time out from the controlled prison regime.	<i>I know some people like to read and shit, but I don't, so I don't use it that way. I just use it for a bit of time out.</i>
Passing time	Any reference to the resources or other services offered by the library as a way to pass time during incarceration.	<i>Yeah it's sweet like. I look at the DVDs, the CDs..I read the papers. Just a way to pass the time really.</i>
Mental health needs	Any reference made to the mental health of prisoners and their specific mental health needs pre- and during incarceration, or observation of poor mental health during fieldwork.	<i>The first student I spoke with in the library today had visible fresh cuts across both his arms and was reading a book about tattoo designs. When I started chatting to him about the book, he said he was trying to find things so he could get the scars on his arms covered up.</i>
Mental health support	Descriptions of personnel, events, resources or other support offered within the prison to support the mental health of prisoners.	<i>The librarian was invited to a 'mental health meeting' to discuss students in education and any potential concerns for individuals.</i>
Family literacy	Any reference to the library as a place which helps to support family literacy, or description by prisoners or their involvement in the literacy of their children.	<i>We're promoting reading, learning and creativity with the aim of enabling people in custody to achieve their full potential, assisting those in custody with young children to improve their literacy and develop skills that will allow them to interact and communicate with their children.</i>
Reliability	References made by prisoners or staff members which show the reliability of prison library staff or statements about the reliability of prison staff in general.	<i>In here's sweet. [The librarian] knows where everything is. She helps us out with the books and DVDs and stuff we wanna look at. We can't always get what we want, but she tries.</i>

Perceptions of public libraries	Examples of how prisoners have used public libraries in the past, what they have used them for and their attitudes toward public libraries.	<i>Oh yeah all the time, my kids love going to the library. It's a good thing to do on a Saturday morning. Where we live, it's like a village, and the library is right in the middle. A bit like here – Hydebank is the village and there's the village library</i>
Self-education	Any reference made by a prisoner about opportunities for self-education in prison and how this is facilitated.	<i>I use the library to educate myself, about my religion, my culture, why Northern Ireland is so important. I do this through books and by talking to [the librarian], and just be chatting about stuff. She looks some stuff up for us online if we ask her.</i>
Learning new information	Any reference made by prisoners about the ways in which they learn new information, or a reference to the library as a place where they can do so.	<i>I like reading law books as well. It was great the other day I was reading something and I finally learnt what MO stood for, Modus Operandi or something like that, and it means mode of operation, and it's always been said but I never knew what it stood for, that was so interesting to me.</i>
Purpose of education	Any reference by staff members or prisoners regarding the purpose and role of education in prisons.	<i>I think it differs for different people. It's a good thing in terms of it being purposeful activity. For those who engage it gives them a confidence boost and they know they have more options. The reason I think it's good is that it ties in with the real world. They realise they need these essential skills even to read letters.</i>
Purpose of prison library	Any reference made by staff or prisoners regarding the role, aim or purpose of the prison library.	<i>So I would see prison libraries having a role to I suppose education, inform and develop skills for learning and for life outside, and pick up on missed opportunities, develop literacy you know, cos people end up in prison for very many reasons.</i>
Encouraging engagement with education	Any evidence of staff members encouraging or motivating prisoners to take part in education classes or informal learning programmes.	<i>And if they say they're really interested in cooking for example, I let them know that still need skills in maths to count out ingredients. If they have goals in mind, they know what they need to get there and that's a motivation.</i>
Level of autonomy	Any reference made by staff or prisoners about the autonomy afforded (or not afforded) to prisoners during incarceration, or observations of prisoner autonomy during fieldwork .	<i>In things like those storytelling workshops they can choose just to sit and listen, and not contribute if they don't want to. There's no pressure to speak up or to read or to say what to think. They can just enjoy the story if they want.</i>

Vulnerability	Any explicit references to or evidence of the vulnerability of prisoners at Hydebank.	<i>They have to go back to the wings with what they've said in that group.</i>
Prior learning experiences	Any description made by prisoners of their level of education or previous learning experiences.	<i>I was kicked out of school in 5th year. It's not that I hated school, I just didn't really apply myself then. I was always getting in trouble. But I do like learning. I actually like educating myself here through using the library and watching documentaries.</i>
Negative attitudes to education	Any negative attitudes expressed by prisoners toward education or learning, or staff references to the negative attitudes held by prisoners.	<i>I hate all this. I don't wanna be in education at all. It's shit.</i>
Positive attitude to education	Any positive attitudes expressed by prisoners toward education or learning, or staff references to the positive attitudes held by prisoners.	<i>School wasn't my strong point. But I like some of the stuff we do in here. I like cooking and horticulture and joinery.</i>
New perspectives	Any evidence of interactions within the library space or use of library resources as opening the eyes of students to new ideas and perspectives.	<i>Those diversity women were in [TIDES]. I spent half my time laughing, it was great craic. We got to see all different perspectives. But that's the only event I've been at.</i>
Cultural differences	Any reference to (or observation of) the cultural differences which exist between prisoners.	<i>"The Prods get everything. Marches and bonfires...I'm not saying they didn't have a hard time too but Catholics definitely suffered more – everything was taken from them!"</i>
Pride in own identity	Any evidence of prisoners taking pride in their own religious, cultural or ethnic identity.	<i>He spoke about being a traveller – there was definitely a pride in this that was backed up by other two travellers in the group.</i>
Attitude toward volunteers	Any reference to prisoners' attitudes to volunteers working in the library, or observation of prisoners' attitudes and behaviour toward these volunteers.	<i>Pretty well on the whole! I'm told they look forward to my visits. It can really depend on the day or depend on the group.</i>
Attitude toward shared reading	Any references made by staff or prisoners about the attitude of prisoners toward the shared reading programme, or observation of prisoner engagement with this programme.	<i>I really like coming to hear [the volunteer] read stories. I'm not timetabled for that you know. I just come because I want to.</i>

Attitude to formal education	Any references made by staff or prisoners about the attitude of prisoners toward formal education classes in prison.	<i>I think it differs for different people. It's a good thing in terms of it being purposeful activity. For those who engage it gives them a confidence boost and they know they have more options. The reason I think it's good is that it ties in with the real world. They realise they need these essential skills even to read letters.</i>
Attitude to informal learning	Any references made by staff or prisoners about the attitude of prisoners toward informal learning opportunities in prison.	<i>Belfast MET wanted to be involved with the programme at an academic level, and to make it an accredited qualification, but Head Office said no to that. It's not our ethos. Our ethos is that it's a voluntary and informal programme. We know they respond well to that.</i>
Sense of achievement	Any evidence of prisoners taking pride in their own achievements or developments in learning during incarceration.	<i>That sense of achievement – that's what motivates them. Both mentor and learner realise they are achieving something and making full use of their time inside.</i>
Celebration of accomplishments	Any evidence of prisoner achievements being celebrated or praised by staff members.	<i>I just read through the wee books they had, and a mate helped me do it. He read it with me. I got through about three of the books...It was good like. We got a bacon bap in the cabin at the end of it.</i>
Voluntary participation	Any evidence of the voluntary participation in learning programmes facilitated by the library, or of prisoners' attitudes toward voluntary participation.	<i>It's usually me reading the story. But I do ask if anyone else would like to read part of it – or perhaps a verse of the poem. I don't force them into it, but if they're willing to that's great.</i>
Pressure to participate	Any evidence of a student feeling pressured to participate either in education classes, library programmes or other prison-based activities.	<i>I think when you compare it to the more formal education they have in our classes, well it's nice to not feel expected to give back. So when they're in the classroom there's a certain level of pressure and expectation that they'll have to answer questions and contribute at least a bit to class discussion – especially because the class sizes are so small. In things like those storytelling workshops they can choose just to sit and listen, and not contribute if they don't want to.</i>

Forced participation	References made toward compulsory participation in education classes or other prison-based programmes, and prisoners' attitudes toward this forced participation.	<i>You're timetabled and that's that. And if you don't come down to education you get locked in your room. I don't like the way we're being forced to come down to education. Sometimes I just wanna be on the landing you know. But then that's counted as a refusal and you'll get adversed. They say they don't lock you up, but they do unless you take part in education.</i>
Increased confidence	Any reference made by staff or prisoners about how engagement with library services or resources can help to increase the confidence of prisoners.	<i>And of course it can increase their confidence – both in their ability to read and just in general. Achieving something like that, it can definitely increase confidence.</i>
Hopes for future	Any references made by prisoners about their hopes and ambitions for the future or for life after release from prison.	<i>Look, I could sit here and lie to you and tell you all my great plans for the future but the truth is I'm going to hit the drink. Not the drugs though I'm gonna try and give those up.</i>
Peer encouragement	Any evidence of positive peer interaction within the library or education space which encourages participation in learning programmes.	<i>The biggest recruiters for the programme are mentors. They know their mate might have reading issues and encourage them to take part.</i>
Peer learning	Any evidence of peer learning taking place within the library or the wider prison.	<i>We both like reading and learning about different things and getting into wee arguments and debates sometimes but that's good I guess.</i>
Socialisation	Any reference to the library space as a place to socialise with other prisoners, or observation of this socialisation.	<i>It's a good socialising place, the library.</i>
Reading for pleasure	Any reference made by prisoners about their enjoyment of reading, and how the library offers resources that facilitate reading for pleasure.	<i>I love reading. I just love to borrow whatever book gets me. That last one I read [the Tattooist of Auschwitz] was brilliant. I like things like that, related to the war. And crime stories.</i>
Learning to read	Any reference made by staff or prisoners about learning to read, particularly if this learning process took place during incarceration.	<i>I love reading. I learnt to read when I was living in England – I've lived all over. But I really started reading at Woodlands, JJC you know? So yeah I guess it's while I was inside that I really started reading.</i>



Impact of reading	Any reference to or evidence of the impacts of individual reading or shared reading during incarceration.	<i>At the end of this session, the librarian tells me that he went to a mental health check-up appointment and talked about how much he enjoyed these Reading Aloud sessions so the senior officer asked the librarian more about it. This officer took books from the library to read out loud to him because he realised that this worked well to get him engaged and also simply to calm him down.</i>
Changes to library	Any explicit references to the library having 'changed' during the transition of Hydebank from a YOC into a Secure College.	<i>Because you were able to come over when you wanted, and spend whatever time you needed to. For some of us, 15-20 minutes is enough in here.</i>
Transition	Any general references made to the transition of Hydebank from a YOC to a Secure College, or evidence of staff or prisoners' attitudes toward this transition period.	<i>Basically they saw a good model when they were over in Manchester and Birmingham and decided they should do it here, and call it a college. But they didn't take into account the baby steps taken to make that model work over here, they just tried to jump right into calling it a college here straight away. And things are different in Northern Ireland. You can't just lift a model from there and apply it here straight away thinking it will work.</i>
Labelling of prisoners	Any evidence of the labeling of prisoners, or the attitudes of prisoners toward how they are labelled in prison.	<i>I do call them students or learners in my classroom – I always have. But if I'm on the landing I'll think of them more as inmates, and then students in education. It is a jail. And it's their home as well, it's not just a college.</i>
Monotonous regime	Any reference made to the repetitiveness or monotony of the daily prison regime, and prisoners' attitudes toward this.	<i>It's like déjà vu in here. It's the same thing every day. You wake up, get washed, come down to education, eat and go back to the landing. Then the same the next day. It's shit. Always the same.</i>
Demonstration of authority	Any references to or observation of the authority demonstrated by prison staff and prisoners' responses to this authority.	<i>You can tell the students love it. And they love the librarian. She knows how to have banter but also to show authority when it's needed.</i>
Humane treatment	Any references to or observation of humane treatment shown by library, education or other prison staff toward prisoners.	<i>Another good thing about the library. [The librarian] treats you like a human being. She doesn't treat you like a number.</i>
Impact of regime	Any references to or observations of unexpected disruptions made to library programmes or events because of the prison regime.	<i>Sometimes they might not be able to attend. I might turn up and no boys are off the wings. But that's prison.</i>

Interest from senior management	Any reference made to the attitudes of senior members of prison staff toward their library or any evidence of their interest in library services.	<i>It has the full backing of Governor number 1. And that's one of the main reasons it runs so well...Once senior management is on board with something, it's all good.</i>
Prison staff attitude to library	Any description of how education staff perceive the library and its services.	<i>It's fantastic. [She] supports us with everything. She gets any resources we need. She supports everyone really – us, prisoners, officers, all staff. She really goes above and beyond.</i>
Staff frustration	Any evidence of staff frustration caused by their working environment.	<i>You come in with all these grand ideas. But then you see the reality of how things are delivered, and you get frustrated, and you're not as idealistic as you once were.</i>
Bridge to participation	Any comments which show that participation in library programmes encourages participation in more formal education classes.	<i>I was told that I wouldn't recognize that person now – [the librarian] spent time encouraging him to engage with other activities and workshops and now he only ever pops into the library to say a quick hello because his timetable is full of others classes.</i>
Disruptive behaviour	Any observations of disruptive behaviour in the library which impacts upon library services, or comments made by staff about the behaviour of library visitors.	<i>The session is interrupted at this point by a couple of prisoners who had been baking in the cookery class and burst into the library loudly brandishing the brownies they have made. This makes the Reading Aloud participants jump up and try to grab the brownies and completely disrupts the session.</i>
Collaboration	Any references to collaboration between education and library staff or observations of how the two departments work together.	<i>I've always thought it was part of education. Not that it was a classroom, the way it kind of is now. It's more of a downtime. It's good to be around books without being forced, it's more of a choice for them. And we can suggest things and steer them toward certain books without forcing it upon them.</i>
Attitude toward incarceration	Any reference made by prisoners toward their general experience of incarceration and their attitude toward prisons and rehabilitation.	<i>This doesn't help. It doesn't stop us reoffending. Hydebank only shows us what it's like when you commit a crime and get locked up. Why don't you show what a different life would look like? In here only makes you worse.</i>
Respect	Any explicit reference to or evidence of respect existing between prisoners and staff or volunteers.	<i>..there's definitely been times where [the librarian] has had to intervene or give a warning – but I think I'm pretty well respected now. You hear some of the loud guys telling others to stop talking so I can get on with the story!</i>

Physical space	Any reference to the physical space of the library and how this impacts upon prisoners' experiences.	<i>Look around, look how bare it is in here. The library's just a nicer room to be in, isn't it? And I'm not saying even that's great. But it's better than these classrooms.</i>
Timetable	Any reference to the timetabling of prisoners' activities and how this impacts upon their experiences of library services.	<i>One of the things about timetabling as well – [the librarian's] not as free to go around and provide services to prisoners when they're not in the library. Before she would have brought books around more to those who couldn't get to the library – now with a stricter timetable, she has less freedom to leave and do that.</i>
Online access	Any reference by staff or prisoners to the level of online access available in prison and prisoners' attitudes toward this access.	<i>It's so frustrating not to be able to get online you know, even just to check little things, like you would outside. When you grab your phone to look up something on Google, but of course you can't do that in here.</i>

### Example of axial coding:

#### Codes

Monotonous regime  
 Passing time  
 Vulnerability  
 Library as escape  
 Library as recreational  
 Library as refuge  
 Library as "your time"  
 Physical space  
 Place to clear head  
 Socialisation  
 Reading for pleasure

#### Sub-categories

Break from prison environment  
 Recreation and relaxation  
 Refuge or sanctuary

#### Core category

Library as place

## HMP Barlinnie Codebook

Code	Description	Example from transcripts
Staff rapport – officers	Any reference (positive, negative, neutral) made by prisoners about their rapport with prison officers, or references made by staff members about the prisoner-officer rapport which exists in the prison, or observation of this rapport during the fieldwork period.	<i>If I'm honest, the staff are no help. A lot of them have the mindset of 'lock us up and throw the boot in us.' They don't care about us or education. Not everyone, but a lot of them think that way.</i>
Staff rapport – library staff	Any reference made by prisoner or staff member about the rapport between prisoners and library officers.	<i>There's a big difference between the officers in the halls and down here. I don't know if that's just [the officers] themselves. Or if it's because it's down here and everything's a good bit different in the Communications Hub</i>
Prison regime	Description of prison regime and prisoners' attitudes toward this routine or interesting observations of this regime.	<i>I'm probably one of the lucky ones. There's guys sitting about in cells because there's no jobs. Have you been in the halls and seen what it's like? The hall manager can make it a tough day. Once someone is out of line everything falls to fuck. You might not get to education then or somewhere else you're meant to be.</i>
Staffing levels	Any reference made to the staffing levels in prison and how this impacts upon access to both the library and education classes.	<i>We did try before to bring people over to the library, a long time ago, to bring them over classroom by classroom. But with security and time and everything, it really wasn't sustainable. Lack of staffing is a big issue.</i>
Access to library	Any reference made to level of library access, time spent in library and barriers to library access.	<i>Yeah and you're not given enough time. You really only have 5 or 10 minutes by the time you get down there. You're in and out.</i>
Access to education	Any reference made to levels of access to education and how prison environment and routine impacts upon this access.	<i>There's no full-time education here now you know. I think it's worse since Fife took over – I've had no education at all. I know I'm down for Communication here but it isn't a full module. I mean we could do whole courses in one year with the amount of time we have. But it isn't happening.</i>
Inconsistent or unfair access	Any reference made by staff or prisoners about the differences in levels of access to either the library or education classes by the mainstream and E-Hall	<i>Yeah! The hall with the monsters – they get to come to the library sometimes three times a day. They're the only hall in here with an actual scheduled working day. Boys in my</i>

	prisoners, and prisoners' attitudes toward this inconsistency.	<i>hall get nothing, and they get everything. We can't get jobs. These type of things get to us.</i>
Music as way of coping	Any reference made by prisoners to music (playing or listening to music) as a way of coping or passing time in prison.	<i>Yeah, music is definitely one of the best things [offered by the library] because it's a coping mechanism.</i>
Access to music	Prisoners' descriptions of their access to music, as provided by the library.	<i>And I'd make sure there was a bigger and better selection of DVDs. Music – we're not allowed to buy in CDs so the library is the only place you can actually get music outside of what you have on the radio or TV. So I'd make sure there was a good music selection too.</i>
Reading as way of coping	Any reference made by prisoners to reading as a way of coping or passing time in prison.	<i>Yeah, the books I've been reading help me through. Textbooks can really only help you with so much. But other books can help you with loads of things, personal skills, things like that.</i>
Access to books	Prisoners' descriptions of their level of access to literature (in library, education or from outside the prison).	<i>And in terms of books, well there's just so many prisoners here, so it's not very good. But it's prison eh, it's not meant to be good.</i>
Television as way of coping	Any reference made by prisoners to television (TV shows or DVDs) as a way of coping or passing time in prison.	<i>Most people use it for DVDs. At the weekend you're locked up from 4pm, so watching DVDs is a good way to pass the time.</i>
Access to DVDs	Prisoners' descriptions of their level of access to DVDs, as provided by library.	<i>I'd get more books and DVDs. Part of the problem with the DVDs though is that people take them and don't bring them back. So I guess I'd create a better system, where people would actually chase you to bring back the DVDs.</i>
Art as a way of coping	Any reference made by prisoners to art (either formal art classes or in-cell art-related activities) as a way of coping or passing time in prison.	<i>I like art. It releases me – I use it to get a little break.</i>
Boredom	References made by prisoners or staff members about the boredom associated with incarceration.	<i>Most of the class seem interested in starting education classes, with one commenting that it will "finally give me something to do."</i>
Lack of stimulation	References made by prisoners or staff about the lack of activities or resources which help to stimulate prisoners during incarceration.	<i>There's a total lack of stimulation in prison. Reading stimulates my brain. A lot of the time I choose to read things I don't understand just to get my juices flowing. I read the reviews in the Observer – you know like reviews on books and the theatre and stuff? I wouldn't even say I really like watching theatre but I still like reading the reviews for ideas.</i>

Passing time	Any reference to the need for 'passing time' during incarceration.	<i>A chance to get your head in a book and pass time. I know a lot of people do enjoy reading and it's their way to escape for a bit. I mean there's only so much daytime TV you can watch.</i>
Censorship	Examples provided by prisoners or staff members of how access to books or other information sources is censored by the prison.	<i>I mean, listen to this. I ordered a book about the Glorious Revolution, and they asked me what it was about, and then I got told no – I couldn't have it – it was religious, it was sectarian. It's a history book! A history of how Home Rule was brought about. So I ordered it myself through Amazon. Then it arrived and security asked me again what it was about, and they wouldn't let me have it. But I wrote a complaint and I got it back eventually. It's educational! It's history isn't it, and I really like to read about history.</i>
Library as recreational	Any reference made to the library as providing a recreational space or recreational resources for prisoners.	<i>I've been in libraries much bigger than here, with more books and computers and chairs and things so you can actually sit in the library for a bit and read or work. You can't do that there – it's just in and out once you've found something to borrow.</i>
Library as escape	Any reference made to library as a place of 'escape' within the prison or to the resources provided by the library offering some 'escape' to prisoners.	<i>It's an escape route. A way to deal with your sentence. It can take you right out of the walls without taking substances or narcotics. And it gives you a bit of your brain back. That's what I think anyway.</i>
Socialisation	Any reference to socialisation experiences among prisoners, or observation of this socialisation.	<i>I didn't know any of them before coming down here. I've been invited into the fold! It's good to mix a bit with the others. You've seen the kind of environment we have done here, it's pretty good. We can have our off days but in general it's a pretty good place to be.</i>
Stress of prison environment	Any description by prisoners or staff about the stress caused by living in the environment of a prison.	<i>Sorry if I don't answer these questions well, it's cos I'm locked up in my cell all the time and it messes with my head.</i>
Missing family	Any references made by prisoners to missing family members and the impact this has on their wellbeing during incarceration.	<i>I'm hoping I'll get transferred to England soon, I should be able to, I've had no visits here.... I've a 10 year old boy and I'm not able to see him.</i>
Family visits	Description of family visiting routine and level of access (or lack of access) to family visits.	<i>Well we get visits. You can get 2 hour children's visits, or 50 minute visits in the week. 2 hours is just a bit much for my 2 ½ year old. But the visits and the way it's changed is the best thing</i>

		<i>to have happened here. In the old visitors hall, if one foot was put out of line you'd be called up on it. In the new visits hall, it's all been done up, and weans are allowed to run around.</i>
Communication with family	Any reference made by staff or prisoners about opportunities to communicate with family members during incarceration.	<i>We have a thing where we can email family members. I'm still in contact with my sister so I ask her and she finds out stuff for me. The latest thing I've asked her about is drugs – I mean the drugs they've put me on in here, I want to know more about them. So she'll find out for me.</i>
Family literacy	Any reference made by prisoners to family literacy programmes offered in prison or references made to reading with children outside of the prison.	<i>I used to do Storybook Dads as well when they were a bit younger and I was inside. But I don't know if you can do that here anymore.</i>
Mental health needs	Any reference made to the mental health of prisoners and their specific mental health needs pre- and during incarceration.	<i>Being in here has depressed the life out of me – I really hate it. You can see why people top themselves – someone did it the other week in here. It's awful....I'm not crazy like, but I do have issues with mental health and depression – sometimes that paper is how I find out about things.</i>
Mental health support	Descriptions of personnel, events, resources or other support offered within the prison to support the mental health of prisoners.	<i>And we have that Fun Day coming up (Cash for Kids). There'll be a mental health stall at that too. People can come and chat to the main source and find out the right answers to things from the people at that stall.</i>
Mental health information	Examples provided by staff or prisoners to accessing information about mental health and wellbeing during incarceration, both within and outside the library.	<i>We're really making a push with mental health stuff. Sending out information about who people can talk to and how to fill in the right forms and things like that, cos things are in meltdown when it comes to mental health.</i>
Reliability of prison staff	References made by prisoners which show the extent to which they feel they can rely on prison staff members for support.	<i>You just gotta ask questions or you don't find out anything. I'd ask a staff member about something and they'd ask someone else but half the time you wouldn't hear back about anything.</i>
Attitude toward communication	Any references which show the attitude of prisoners toward the level of communication within the prison.	<i>You can't find anything out in here. Anything you do find out, you find out from other inmates. Or you find out afterwards... you do something and get punished and they only tell you after it happens, but how was I supposed to know when no one tells you anything? Communication in here</i>

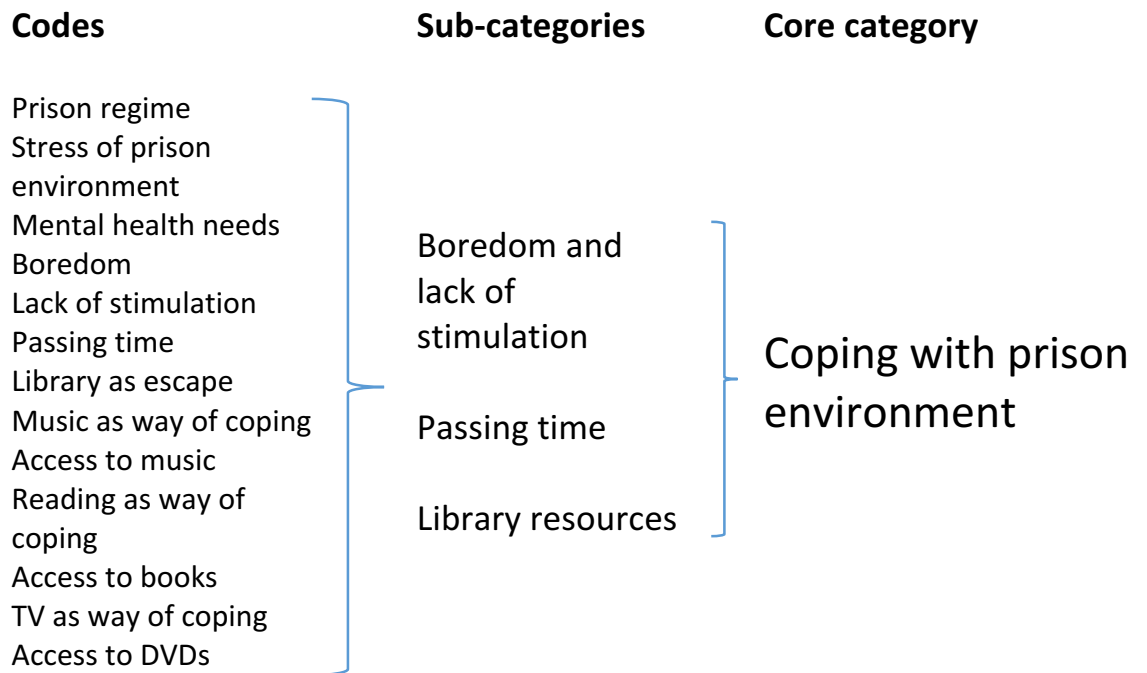
		<i>– across the whole jail – it’s a bit of a joke if I’m honest.</i>
Methods of communication	Any examples of the way information is communicated to prisoners during incarceration.	<i>Well there are noticeboards in each hall, but you usually hear things from other people before you find out things that way. You don’t really have much access to go down and see the noticeboards, especially if you’re out working all day. If you don’t have a job, you can make requests in the morning – like if you want to go the library or maybe the gym that day, or if you want to use the shower – so if you’re making your requests you might have time to stop and look at the noticeboards but I’m not sure if anyone really pays much attention to it. And to be honest I noticed something from 2011 on there the other day so I’m not sure how often they’re updated.</i>
Communication with peers	Any references made by prisoners about how they share information with each other and learn from each other.	<i>I actually heard about it through a pal in my guitar class. I play guitar. You don’t get jobs when you’re on remand, so I hadn’t heard about it. I was like, ‘you’re doing what? Working on a radio?’ And he pointed me toward the channel so I could listen to it. I thought, yes this is something I’d wanna do.</i>
Changes to library	Any description of how the library at Barlinnie has changed within recent years and the attitudes of both staff and prisoners towards these changes.	<i>We’ve had creative weeks too with poets, authors, workshops and a comedy club. That’s when I was in a few years ago. But the library’s changed a bit, I don’t think there’s as much of that going on as there used to be.</i>
Physical library space	Any reference made by staff or prisoners about the physical space of the library and how this affects engagement with library services, or observation of prisoners’ interaction with the space of the library.	<i>I’d make sure we had longer sessions in the library, so you go and sit there. The library I liked most was Edinburgh as you could sit in it, just like a normal library really.</i>
Perceptions of public libraries	Examples of how prisoners have used public libraries in the past, what they have used them for and their attitudes toward public libraries.	<i>I actually used libraries to send faxes and emails. I’ll be visiting the Mitchell library when I get out, especially for the free WIFI. You really can’t do anything without WIFI. Social security forms, job searching - you need WIFI to do that. So the library is great for things like that.</i>
Perceptions of prison libraries	References made by prisoners about their experiences of prison libraries, particularly their	<i>I’ve been in libraries much bigger than here, with more books and computers and chairs and things so you can</i>



	experiences in previous prisons and how these differ from their experiences at Barlinnie.	<i>actually sit in the library for a bit and read or work. You can't do that there – it's just in and out once you've found something to borrow.</i>
Informal learning opportunities	Any description or example of the informal learning opportunities available at Barlinnie and prisoners' attitude toward these opportunities.	<i>I heard they started doing book clubs here – on a Thursday or Friday I think, but I can't get to that. I don't think that's through the library though, that's education. I've heard whispers of author events but that was nearly a year ago and I was just finding my feet then so I didn't get along to anything. I haven't heard anything more about that since.</i>
Literacy needs	Any references made by prisoners or staff which show the distinct literacy needs of prisoners at Barlinnie, or direct observation of literacy needs.	<i>I've spent all of my adult life in prison, so my education has happened here. I didn't complete school, I got expelled. But I've done a few courses in prison. I did all the basic Level 1 and Level 2 stuff but I got bored of that. I've even done a couple of OU courses. I buy books myself and I study myself. I'm in second year degree level now of Health and Social Care, and I've also done higher level stuff in Community Education.</i>
Formal education support	Any reference made by prisoners about the support they need to undertake formal education, particularly the support which could be offered by the library.	<i>For example, we were learning about Animal Farm in class and I asked the library if we could get it in but they said 'no, we don't have the budget for that.' I ended up ordering a copy of that for myself too. So I guess you can see the disconnect there, can't you?</i>
Self-education	Any reference made by a prisoner about opportunities for self-education in prison and how this is facilitated.	<i>But my expertise is in IT. And I've taught myself from books. There's not much access to IT stuff here. It's obviously really limited. But I've been able to teach myself programme even through reading.</i>
Purpose of education	Any reference by staff members or prisoners regarding the purpose and role of education in prisons.	<i>It's things that prisoners won't have done before. We provide higher level reading groups, philosophy classes, film making classes through university partnerships. Basically, what we're trying to do is stimulate people. And I would want to note that the most important thing is how we offer this education and how we work with people on a daily basis. It's all to do with the philosophy in how we treat individuals.</i>
Encouraging engagement with education	Any evidence of staff members encouraging or motivating prisoners to take part in	<i>It's alright them focusing on education and saying they need basic literacy skills but you need to be more creative about doing it – you can't just</i>

	education classes or informal learning programmes.	<i>send them off to literacy and numeracy or no one will want to do that. I want to make learning more creative, so that people will actually want to take part and will enjoy learning and get something more out of it. It gets them started in education.</i>
'Disconnect' between library and college	Descriptions by both staff and prisoners about the lack of communication between or level of 'disconnect' between the education department and the library at Barlinnie and the consequences of this 'disconnect'.	<i>It's totally separate. It's not linked with education at all. And education is horrendous too. Sometimes you get called for it, sometimes you don't, you never know.</i>
Staff attitudes to library	Any reference made by a staff member about the role and value of the prison library or the standard of library services they think should be afforded to prisoners.	<i>You know I did a Masters which looked at education in prisons, specifically focusing on long term prisoners at Shotts. This gave me a good insight into how the library was valued. They spoke of it being a different space psychologically, of being a safe space – even physically. A place where they could have conversations that they wouldn't ever feel comfortable having in the halls. And the library was the hub of the learning centre here. So I'm really focused on trying to make the necessary changes to other prisons where the library hasn't been given the same attention and so isn't offering what it should be.</i>
Level of autonomy	Any reference made by staff or prisoners about the autonomy afforded (or not afforded) to prisoners during incarceration, or observations of prisoner autonomy during fieldwork.	<i>Art helps me the most in here. When I'm there for that couple of hours I feel at peace with myself. It's a bit of freedom. And the only thing I can make a choice about. Anything else you're told what to do and when to do it – when to eat, when to shower, when to leave your cell and when to go back. I hate it.</i>
Educational aspirations	Any reference made by prisoners about their educational goals or aspirations, either during incarceration or post-release.	<i>I'm going to keep on educating myself and doing these day courses because I want to do an OU course, I want to study Law. In here, that's a 5 year thing, and you need a minimum of English Higher. Outside it's harder to get onto a Law course, plus it takes you 7 years. So that's my plan.</i>
Changes facilitated by education	Any description of how education experiences or	<i>You're learning things you know, and giving something back. And because</i>

	opportunities have led to either short or long-term changes within the lives of prisoners.	<i>of education, now everything is different for me: what I think, my family situation, social circles. I would never have imagined the power that education could have.</i>
Changes facilitated by reading	Any references made by prisoners about the impact of reading or changes which have been facilitated by reading in prison.	<i>Yeah my reading tastes are totally different from when I came in. I used to love classic novels, but since coming in here I read a lot more crime novels. Though I'm really into Russian classics at the moment too. I'm reading Dostoevsky now.</i>
Access to IT resources	Any references made by staff or prisoners to the level of access to IT resources, either in the library or education department.	<i>There's not much access to IT stuff here. It's obviously really limited. But I've been able to teach myself programming even through reading.</i>
Access to online information	Any reference made by staff or prisoners about the level of access to online information and the need to access information online.	<i>I used libraries outside to use the internet. I am from Somalia. It is a war torn country and I used the internet in the library to find out about Somalia. Every day from Monday to Friday, I went to find out the news about my country. But you can't find that kind of information out here, because there's no internet.</i>
Information access	References made by staff or prisoners about the level of access to necessary information in prison, or examples of how such information is accessed.	<i>There is no [online] access at all across the prison estate...I totally support it, it's just trying to convince an executive group to do it. We do have a state of the art intranet though, and Fife College have a full time worker who goes around different estates to keep that updated.</i>
Information and the library	Any reference made by staff or prisoners about the level of access to information facilitated by the library.	<i>In some prisons you might even spend an hour in the library. There could be a couple of computers and you'd have leaflets and information on things and you could find stuff out. In here, you can find nothing out. It's the worst prison I've been in for that.</i>

**Example of axial coding:**

## Appendix I: Ethical approval (UUREC and NIPS)



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T: +44 (0)28 9036 6552/6518/6629  
ulster.ac.uk

Our Ref: NC:GOV

**19 July 2018**

Dr T Irwin  
Room 14L15  
School of Education  
Ulster University  
Jordanstown Campus

Dear Dr Irwin

**Research Ethics Committee Application Number: REC/18/0035**

**Study Title: A new paradigm for prison library services? Exploring the role of the library in the lives of incarcerated individuals**

Thank you for your recent response to matters raised by the committee. This has been considered and the decision of the committee is that the research should proceed.

Please also note the additional documentation relating to research governance and indemnity matters, including the requirements placed upon you as Chief Investigator.

The committee's decision is valid for a period of three years from today's date (this means that the study should be completed by that date). If you require this period to be extended, please contact the Research Governance section.

- 1. Please complete and return the Chief Investigator Statement of Compliance prior to commencing the study and keep a copy for your file.**
- 2. Please retain all other documents.**

Further details of the University's policy along with guidance notes, procedures, terms of reference and forms are available on the Ulster University Portal.

If you need any further information or clarification of any points, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

  
Nick Curry  
Head of Research Governance  
028 9036 6629  
[n.curry@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:n.curry@ulster.ac.uk)



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## ULSTER UNIVERSITY

## RESEARCH GOVERNANCE

### Research on human participants being conducted by staff and/or students of the University

Please find attached a letter from the University Research Ethics Committee confirming that it has considered and approved your application to undertake research involving human participants.

The University's policy requires the Research Governance section to:

- Seek confirmation that arrangements are in place for the research to begin, including arrangements to manage the study
- Ensure that the research protocol, the investigators and the environment are appropriate
- Confirm that ethical approval has been obtained before a study begins
- Ensure that good practice arrangements are maintained for the duration of the study in relation to the conduct of the study, monitoring and reporting (including the immediate reporting of adverse events)

The requirements upon the investigators are to:

- conduct the study in line with the approved protocol
- retain and maintain records, including hard copies of signed consent forms, appropriately
- provide reports as required during and at the end of the study
- report any adverse events
- seek prior approval for amendments to the protocol

In addition to complying with the University's requirements, you must also familiarise yourself with the requirements of any other organisations involved in the research as collaborators, hosts or funders.

Please do not hesitate to contact Research Governance should you require any further information.

 Nick Curry  
 Head of Research Governance  
 028 9036 6629  
 n.curry@ulster.ac.uk



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**ULSTER UNIVERSITY**

**RESEARCH GOVERNANCE**

**Chief Investigator Statement of Compliance**

*To be returned following receipt of a favourable ethical opinion and/or HSC Trust permission and prior to commencement of the study*

Name of CI: Dr T Irwin  
 Ulster Research Governance Study Ref: REC/18/0035  
 ORECNI Study Ref: N/A  
 Study title: A new paradigm for prison library services? Exploring the role of the library in the lives of incarcerated individuals

Collaborating HSC/NHS organization: N/A

I understand that Ulster University has agreed to act as sponsor/co-sponsor or equivalent for the above study and that this places certain obligations upon me as Chief Investigator.

These are:

- to adhere to the research ethics, governance and other appropriate policies of the University and any HSC/NHS organisation involved in the study
- to conduct the study in full compliance with the approved protocol
- to report any adverse events as required by the University and HSC/NHS procedures
- to provide interim and final reports on the progress and outcomes of the study
- to seek advance permission for any amendments or extensions to the study
- where appropriate to register the study on a publicly accessible database

I agree to the above and confirm that:

- the host HSC/NHS organisation (where applicable) is aware of and supports this study
- a favourable ethical opinion has been obtained (where applicable) and the study will commence on

date: ..... 1/9/18 .....

and end on

date: ..... 30/8/19 .....

Signed:

Tracy S -

22/7/18

**ULSTER UNIVERSITY****RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE****Guidance**

I have received ethical approval from the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC). What should I do now?

You can commence the research once you have completed and returned the Chief Investigator Statement of Compliance and have all other necessary permissions and approvals in place.

**What should I do if...****the commencement of the research is delayed?**

Contact the Research Governance office. They will confirm when the ethical approval expires and advise you whether or not there is anything you need to do.

**the research takes longer than originally indicated?**

The Research Governance office will advise whether or not the period of ethical approval will expire prior to the completion of the project. You might have to apply for an extension of the period of ethical approval. If this is the case, you should do so before the current approval period expires (see the next question).

**there is an amendment to my project?**

It is likely that any amendment will result in changes to the research team, the protocol, participant information sheets or will have implications for recruitment or the scientific quality of the research. Any such amendments (except for urgent safety measures) will require approval from the UREC. You should complete form RG6 available on the Ulster University Portal.

**I am asked to complete a progress report?**

For projects lasting longer than 12 months, progress reports are requested on behalf of the UREC by the Research Governance Office. You should complete a short progress report indicating the date of commencement and details of progress to date. Ethical approval is kept under review by the UREC.

**I am asked to complete a final report?**

As Chief Investigator, you have signed a Statement of Compliance requiring you to provide a final report on the outcomes of the project. This report should detail any difficulties or adverse events, outcomes, publications/other output and further research that is likely to take place as a result of your project.

**An adverse event occurs?**

Urgent safety measures undertaken to protect participants or researchers should be notified at the earliest opportunity. The procedures for reporting such occurrences are available on the Ulster University Portal. For projects involving the use of relevant material under the Human Tissue Act, see also SOP 9, available on the Ulster University Portal.

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Tel: 020 7847 8670  
Fax: 020 7847 8689



TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

1<sup>st</sup> June 2017

Dear Sir/Madam

**UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER  
AND ALL ITS SUBSIDIARY COMPANIES**

We confirm that the above Institution is a Member of U M Association Limited, and that the following covers are currently in place:-

**EMPLOYERS' LIABILITY**

Certificate No.	Y016458QBE0117A/173
Period of Cover	1 August 2017 to 31 July 2018
Limit of Indemnity	£25,000,000 any one event unlimited in the aggregate.
Includes	Indemnity to Principals
Cover provided by	QBE Insurance (Europe) Limited and Excess Insurers.

**PUBLIC AND PRODUCTS LIABILITY**

Certificate of Entry No.	UM173/16
Period of Cover	1 August 2017 to 31 July 2018
Includes	Indemnity to Principals
Limit Of Indemnity	£30,000,000 any one event and in the aggregate in respect of Products Liability and unlimited in the aggregate in respect of Public Liability.
Cover provided by	U M Association Limited and Excess Cover Providers led by QBE Insurance (Europe) Limited

If you have any queries in respect of the above details, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully

Susan Wilkinson  
For U.M. Association Limited



U M Association Limited  
Registered Office: Hasilwood House, 60 Bishopsgate, London, EC2N 4AW  
Registered in England and Wales No. 2731799

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60 Bishopsgate  
London EC2N 4AW  
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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

15<sup>th</sup> July 2017

Dear Sir/Madam

**UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER  
AND ALL ITS SUBSIDIARY COMPANIES**

We confirm that the above Institution is a Member of U.M. Association Limited, and that the following cover is currently in place:-

**PROFESSIONAL INDEMNITY**

Certificate of Entry No.	UM173/16
Period of Cover	1 August 2017 to 31 July 2018
Limit of Indemnity	£10,000,000 any one claim and in the aggregate except for Pollution where cover is limited to £1,000,000 in the aggregate.
Cover provided by	U.M. Association Limited and Excess Cover Providers led by CNA Insurance Company Ltd

If you have any queries in respect of the above details, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan Wilkinson'.

Susan Wilkinson  
For U.M. Association Limited



U.M. Association Limited  
Registered Office: Hasilwood House, 60 Bishopsgate, London, EC2N 4AW  
Registered in England and Wales No. 2731799

From: Acting Director of Rehabilitation



Room 311, Dundonald House  
Upper Newtownards Road  
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Tel: 028 9052 4632  
Email: [louise.cooper@justice-ni.x.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:louise.cooper@justice-ni.x.gsi.gov.uk)

15 June 2018

Jayne Finlay  
School of Education  
Ulster University  
(BY E-MAIL)

Dear Jayne,

RE: "A new paradigm for prison library service? Exploring the role of the library in the lives of incarcerated individuals"

Further to a meeting of the NIPS Research Committee and subsequent discussions with staff in Hydebank Wood College, I am pleased to confirm that approval has been given for the above research to proceed. In considering the proposal, the Research Committee was of the view that this research is relevant to the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) as it continues to contribute to a safer Northern Ireland. Please note this approval is given on the understanding that NIPS reserves the publication rights to all research conducted and permission must be sought before any material is published.

Your overall point of contact will be Eileen Crone ([Eileen.crone@justice-ni.x.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Eileen.crone@justice-ni.x.gsi.gov.uk)) who works in NIPS Headquarters and will be available for any issues you may need resolved. Your point of contact in Hydebank Wood College will be Jackie Stanfield ([Jackie.stanfield@justice-ni.x.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Jackie.stanfield@justice-ni.x.gsi.gov.uk)) who will be able to assist you with practical issues such as security clearance and scheduling of your research. Before a security pass is issued you will need to fill in a self-disclosure form (attached) and send this to Jackie.

In the meantime, may I take this opportunity to wish you well in your research, and I look forward to reading the final report.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Louise Cooper".

Louise Cooper  
Acting Director of Rehabilitation

Cc  
Eileen Crone, NIPS Headquarters  
Jackie Stanfield, Hydebank Wood College