

**“We are ‘free range’ prison officers”, the experiences of Scottish Prison Service (SPS)  
Throughcare Support Officers (TSOs) working in custody and the community**

Matthew Maycock (University of Dundee)

Kenny McGuckin (Scottish Prison Service)

Katrina Morrison (Edinburgh Napier University)

Between 2015 and 2019, forty-one Throughcare Support Officers (TSOs) supported people serving short sentences leaving custody across eleven Scottish Prison Service (SPS) establishments. The role of prison officers in the provision of throughcare in the community was an innovation in Scotland and represents a new approach to the long-standing challenges around supporting reintegration from custody'. Drawing on data from semi-structured interviews with 20 TSOs, this paper examines their reflections on their role, bringing attention for the first time to the frontline perspectives of those involved in this novel approach to throughcare. TSO's reflections revealed their growing awareness of the 'pains of desistance' (Nugent and Schinkel, 2016) and the challenges around reintegration, insights which had not been apparent to them in their prior work as officers working only in prison. The community 'place' of the TSO work also enabled a renewed awareness of the limits of rehabilitation within a prison, and their own institutionalization after years of working in the custodial environment.

## **Introduction**

Prison officer work is conventionally shaped by the prison context (Coyle, 1986; Crawley, 2004a; Crawley and Crawley, 2008; Crawley, 2004b; Liebling, 2000; Liebling, 2011; Liebling et al., 2011; Scott, 2006; Sim, 2008; Tait, 2011), more specifically through material manifestations of the role such as the uniform (Ash, 2010), the physical prison environment and working with diverse and often vulnerable people in custody. Prison officers are synonymous with the prison environment, the concept of a 'total institution' suggesting that the staff can become institutionalized as well as those who live in custody (1961). In this study we examine the implications of place for prison officers whose work is largely located in the community, something normally quite rare for prison officers. It is through the reflections of these prison officers into this new type of throughcare, that unique insights are outlined into the multiple difficulties of resettlement and reintegration of those leaving custody. In this article we argue that the TSO role sheds new light on the challenges that those leaving custody face in terms of rehabilitation and reintegration in Scotland. This is creating more understanding and giving a new perspective on the prison officer occupation.

The 2013 Scottish Prison Service (SPS) organisational review (Unlocking Potential, Transforming Lives), focused on desistance as its theoretical underpinning (McNeill, 2016). It is within the Scottish Prison Service that desistance theories have had particular impact (McNeill, 2016), with the key areas of desistance theory reflected in organizational vision and values and key policy documents (SPS, 2013; SPS, 2016). Although McNeill (2016) has criticised this approach as being overly, individualised and responsabilising pointing to the challenges of operationalising desistance theory into meaningful rehabilitation. Within the Scottish context, ‘desistance’, rather than ‘rehabilitation’ is often referred to as the aspiration of key parts of the justice (Sapouna et al., 2011; Sapouna et al., 2015).

In Scotland, criminal justice social work provides mandatory support for those released to the community who have served a long-term sentence, or four years or more. Throughcare support was developed in this context as the SPS felt there were disconnections between those leaving its care and services in the community following release and wider issues with a lack of support for short term prisoners reintegrating back into the community. As a consequence of these disconnections the desistance journeys of those leaving custody was more challenging, particularly for those serving short sentences (four years or less).

There is a notable distinction in the services available after release to those with long-term sentences (greater than four years) and short-term sentences (less than four years) in Scotland. There is no compulsory supervision following release for most of those serving short-term sentences (with the exception of short-term sentences for sexual crimes, for whom it remains compulsory). Nonetheless, those released from short-term sentences are entitled to request such support whilst in prison and for a 12-month period following release. However, the uptake of this voluntary support remains limited and has dropped consistently in recent years from over 2,400 in 2012/13 to only 1,700 individuals receiving this support in 2018/19 (Scottish\_Government, 2020). This lack of support is even more important in the context of those typically serving short sentences, whose needs are amongst the most acute (Cracknell, 2018), who typically lead ‘chaotic lifestyles’, and whose risk of reoffending is the greatest (Audit\_Scotland, 2012). Furthermore, those serving short-term sentences receive fewer rehabilitative interventions in prison, yet their sentence is long-enough for their relationships, employment, financial stability, and housing to be disrupted (Armstrong and Weaver, 2013).

Within this context, the SPS introduced the Throughcare Support Officer (TSO) role to provide advocacy and support to those people serving short term sentences in the transition between custody and community. One of the key responsibilities of TSOs was to facilitate access to key services (benefits, housing, etc), as well support their motivation and relationships in the community. Given the non-statutory nature of this provision, the support they provided is on a voluntary basis, thus if those they are supporting chooses to terminate with their services, they are free so do to do. TSOs spend most (around 75%) of their working time in the community as opposed to custody. Critically, for the purposes of our arguments, while these prison staff remain prison officers, they do not wear uniform and their work is based largely in the community.

After an evaluation report (Cochrane, 2014), the SPS appointed 41 Throughcare Support Officers (TSOs) and 3 Throughcare Support Managers (TSMs) across 11 sites (with the exception of the Open Estate and a prison for long-term prisoners). Five years later, in 2019, due to operational pressures within the SPS (an overcrowded prison estate, combined with increasing levels of staff absences), the delivery of throughcare support by the SPS was paused, with the Wise Group (a social enterprise) winning the contract to deliver this service across Scotland. Whilst the SPS and the Scottish Government have always claimed that the intention is to resurrect the TSO role within SPS when this pressure eases (Diamond, 2019), this role was never regarded as a core function of the SPS's responsibilities, and as such, was always likely to remain vulnerable in a service under considerable pressure.

Ultimately, prison officers embody the prison regime, therefore the contradictions within imprisonment as a social institution are reflected in their work. The repetitive nature of the regime is important in relation to the performance of prison officer identities, Feldman (2003) has explored this in other contexts. Prison officers often view the provision of safety in the prison environment as a central part of their role, which is achieved through a continual monitoring and maintenance of static and dynamic security (Arnold, 2016; Liebling, 2000; Liebling, 2011; Liebling et al., 2011; Scott, 2006; Tait, 2011). However, prison officers are also required to promote desistance and to 'rehabilitate', through pro-social modelling, building personal and social assets and the fostering of hope and a crime-free identity (SPS, 2016). The contradiction of these aspirations within an environment which can also fracture community relationships and re-enforce a criminal identity, is an ever-present tension within imprisonment and prison officer work (McNeil and Schinkel, 2016). This study explores the 'place' of prison to prison officers' working identities and understanding of their role, as well as the potential contribution to

reintegration that prison staff can make outside of the prison walls. In so doing, this paper brings to attention this innovative approach to throughcare delivery, which has relevance for all jurisdictions seeking to support those leaving custody.

### **Prison Officer Work and Resettlement**

Prison officer work is often (mistakenly) assumed to relate to the practical tasks that form part of the job which relate chiefly to the maintenance of security and the management of risk, priorities considered ‘the foundation’ of prison officer work (Arnold, 2016). The work is marked by the routine of the prison regime, and has been described as “largely mundane”, and marked by “unlocking prisoners, checking locks, bolts and bars, carrying out roll checks, dealing with prisoner requests or disciplinary offences, serving meals, supplying toilet rolls, changing the laundry, delivering the post, playing pool, watching television, reading the newspaper, talking with officers and prisoners, or drinking tea” (Scott, 2006: , 15). However, these accounts of prison overlook the very considerable skill required for the job, abilities and attributes which are often not even apparent to the officers themselves in their day-to-day work (Sparks et al., 1996). Prison officer work necessitates the balance of ‘security values’ with ‘harmony values’ (Liebling, 2004), and the ability to work through, and maintain the ‘right’, relationships with those under their care (Liebling, 2011).

As Sykes (2007) first noted, those who live and work within prisons form societies themselves, therefore, the *social* experience of working is a central element of prison officer work (Crawley, 2004). The camaraderie of colleagues is informed not by only the need to work closely in order to provide security, but it is also a function of working in an enclosed and often pressurized working environment. The camaraderie and humour associated with the work also support resilience and an ability to cope with the stresses of the emotional labour of the work (Crawley, 2004a, Crawley & Crawley, 2008, Arnold, 2016). Prison officer working identities are intrinsically bound with symbolic markers such as their uniform and the physical prison environment. Though ‘white shirts’ (or prison officer uniforms) may have a functional purpose (i.e. quick identification at times of risk), they also serve a symbolic function which facilitates the legitimate use of authority (Ash, 2010).

### **Ethics and Methods**

This research project was independently developed by the authors who had an interest in the working lives of the throughcare support officers and wanted to situate this within the academic literature. Three main research questions guided the data collection for this project. 1) Does Goffman's theory of the 'total institution' have relevance in contemporary prison systems? 2) In what ways do the experiences of TSOs working the community support or undermine the concept of the total institution? 3) What is the experience of Throughcare by Throughcare Support Officers (TSOs) of working outside of the prison walls? Ethical approval granted by the SPS Research Access Ethics Committee, and a semi structured topic guide was developed. Informed consent was given by all participants, with assurances of anonymity given to all participants. Additionally, all research participants were given a draft of this article to comment on before submission, in order for them to be able to comment on how their narratives have been represented and analysed. This resulted in some amendments to the version of the article submitted. All recordings and transcripts were stored securely, with all identifying information stored separately (in line with ESRC ethical guidance). In total, 20 interviews were undertaken between April and June 2018 with a representative sample of TSOs, in terms of age, gender and career stage. This represents a 49% sample of the 41 total group of TSOs. On average the 20 participants had worked for the prison service for around 18 years. The 20 TSOs came from a range of career backgrounds within the SPS prior to becoming a TSO, although the majority had worked in prisoner rehabilitation programmes, which is quite a different role within prison compared to residential prison officer roles. This might suggest that these individual officers were perhaps already more willing to challenge their own thinking about 'rehabilitation' and to work in new ways. TSOs were interviewed from six prisons across Scotland, in order to provide insights in how the job varies by prison population and locality. Interviews were transcribed and analysed in Nvivo 11. Subsequently, an inductive analysis of the data was undertaken, using themes emerging from the data with a particular focus on the unique insights into rehabilitation that the TSOs had was conducted by all authors facilitating the checking of analysis between the authors. This has facilitated a critical engagement with the existing prison officer literature and Goffman's theory, through which aspects of the impact of throughcare support are illuminated.

### **Findings – The importance of place in shaping TSO insights into rehabilitation**

The findings are shaped around multiple perspectives from the TSOs interviewed, relating to aspects of their role as TSOs that illuminate the importance of custody and community as shaping the professional insights into rehabilitation for these prison staff.

*Time spent in the community and its impact: understanding and supporting reintegration*

The central finding from this study relates to the perspective gained from working in the community with prior incarcerated persons and how that impacts the TSOs. The majority of TSOs indicated that they spent most of their working week (around 75%) in the community, and not in prison. For many of the TSOs, the biggest impact that working in the community held, was to bring a deeper insight into the lives of those in custody. The challenges of reintegration had often not been considered to the same extent within their previous roles within prison:

What we've seen in the community, and what these people face on a daily basis, is just horrific. Having nowhere to go after getting released. Benefits not being up and running, so they've got to wait two or three weeks for money to come in, and they've to survive on, sometimes, £50 to £70, depending on their age. And you're like, how can somebody survive like that? Then, if they do get a place, its places that you couldn't even imagine anybody would live in. (TSO14+15)

There was a consistent sentiment of shock at the challenges people leaving custody faced upon release, something that these prison officers had largely not considered before working as a TSO. Working with people in the community who they had previously worked with in custody provided insights into the extent to which people had different lifestyles in prison to the community. There was a consistent implication that there was more chaos in the community than custody:

They're sometimes like two different people, you know, that I think that's the thing, you can maybe deal with somebody all the time in custody and then they're totally different when they get out. The chaos. The, kind of, lifestyle they're going back to because in [prison] they're a captive audience. (TSO1)

This resonates with a wider discourse in which stability (an orderly regime) in prisons was of great importance to prison officers (Crewe et al., 2011). These were insights into the lives of those

leaving custody that the TSOs felt it was beneficial to see and better understand, which gave them insights into the person rather than their sentence:

Because sometimes you get more insight into the person as a whole rather than you're just not seeing them as a prisoner, you know, like when you're in the prison it's, I say jump, you jump. (TSO13)

Interestingly these were not aspects of prison and post-prison life that these prison officers had reflected on previously, these insights were specific to the TSO role. All of the TSOs viewed this deeper insight into the lives of those they were supporting as a positive part of their role:

For 17 years I saw this side of the [prison] wall, now I've the benefit of seeing the other side of the wall. I think you have a bit more understanding of people's backgrounds, the problems that face people, social, economic, geographic even, you know, what they're living in, where they're living, how they're living. When you see the rest of their life..., it gives you much more of an understanding into an individual's behaviour. (TSO6)

Both the prison and pre-prison lives of those leaving custody formed a consistent barrier to the successful transition from custody to the community, issues that the TSOs at times found insurmountable. To an extent this created a fatalism about the potential contribution of prisons to the rehabilitation of those they were supporting:

But she was judged a lot on her past behaviour. So, what we found was, we were coming against a lot of kind of brick walls with community workers. Because she'd had massive issues with drugs, because her mental health was really poor, due to the drug taking, they, a lot of people were like, well that's just what she'll do, she'll just go, she'll do this, and she'll end up back into the jail, and there's no point trying. (TSO14+15).

These challenges point towards wider societal issues and stigma that those leaving custody have to navigate in relation to rehabilitation. Some TSOs felt as though it was the community, rather than the individuals they were supporting, which was the largest barrier to integration, supporting the concept of tertiary desistance (McNeill, 2016):

I mean, challenges, is the stigma, it's the, out in the community, it's the public, and it's their perception of what should be happening to guys in prison. And it's about trying to change the mindset of people out there, is the biggest problem. (TSO11)

These challenges of reintegration was something that the TSOs generally found distressing and something that they were not prepared for having previously worked exclusively within prison. Additionally, the setbacks that the people leaving custody faced were frustrating and disappointing for the TSOs. This illuminates the non-linear nature of desistance (Nugent and Schinkel, 2016), and some of the limitations of the contribution that prisons and the wider criminal justice system can have in relation to rehabilitation:

The ones that are disappointing are the ones where you've put a lot of work and effort in place and they've been doing all the right things, they've got a house, you've managed to get them some furniture, they're doing training for work maybe, and they're doing all the right things, their benefits are in place. Then all of a sudden they're back in prison because they've just literally bumped into the wrong person at the wrong time and they've done something which has brought them back into custody. (TSO13)

There was a sense in the interviews of a limited influence and contribution of prisons in the context of bad luck (as above) and more widely a challenging context of reintegration. For some people leaving custody, the transition to the community resulted in isolation and difficulties the TSOs felt were not present while they were in custody (see also Nugent and Schinkel (2016)). TSOs thus became a crutch for these people in that initial period after release.

But their biggest thing is feeling lonely. So, they come into prison, they've got a daily routine, they've got people roundabout them all the time, they've got things to do to build themselves up, their self-esteem, and their confidence. And then, they're out, on liberation, put into wherever they're put. It's usually four walls, no telly, nobody around about them, and then we wonder why things go wrong. And so sometimes, we're the only people that they see, or speak to, in a week. (TSO14+15).

This placed an emotional strain on some TSOs, that they had not experienced while working exclusively in prison previously. The pressures that the TSOs face in supporting people leaving custody with complex needs took its toll for some officers:



And then, you're working to time limits if you've got appointments to make. And then, just managing, or helping to support these people with really horrific needs, that's, aye, that's exhausting. (TSO14+15).

Evidentially this is a challenging role, requiring significant resilience by the TSOs in order for them to provide the support that people leaving custody require in order to successfully transition to the community (resilience is consistently found to be critical within prisons too (Crawley, 2004a)). Building relationships with people inside and leaving custody, as well as working with community-based partners is central to enabling success as a TSO. Conversations with TSOs included in this research reflected the effort and energy required for the role, and the importance of developing relationships that enabled them to support those leaving custody. Throughcare support is predicated on positive relationships between prison staff and people in custody which begin in the prison prior to release. These relationships have the potential to be 'strengths' (or assets) contributing to desistance narratives of those leaving custody (Maruna and LeBel, 2002). For TSOs, the relationship with those they supported was paramount in their work:

And it's about using the relationship between staff and prisoners, and using that out through the gate, and back into the community. (TSO10)

For these officers, throughcare support was the continued extension of the positive work which the SPS had done in supporting people in, and leaving, custody to desist from crime. There were often synergies in the ways in which TSOs described their roles, and what Maruna (2001) and others (Bosick et al., 2015; Singer et al., 1998; Vanhooren, 2016) have described as a person-centered approach, in which services are tailored and designed around the needs of the individual rather than organisation. TSOs felt that the voluntary nature of the service also means that the person leaving custody might respond to the support in a different way than were it compulsory:

I think, with throughcare support, it's not an exact science, because it's about that journey. It's a person-centred approach. And because it's a voluntary service, it's not like a supervised release order, where he's obliged to meet, like, the social workers. This is a voluntary approach, where he's identified that he could do with a wee bit of help, because he's maybe wanting to break the cycle of offending behaviour. (TSO5)

It is well established that imprisonment has a range of impacts on the desistance journey of those within and leaving custody (Maruna and Toch, 2005; McNeill et al., 2012; Owers et al., 2011; Schinkel, 2014). In the quote above we see an instance of the positive impact that TSOs felt they can have in relation to desistance and rehabilitation. The theory of desistance proposes a framework for understanding the process of a cessation or reduction in offending behaviours over time (Maruna, 2001; McNeill et al., 2012). It is evident that the TSOs were an extension of SPS's commitment to support rehabilitation and desistance, although as this section has illustrated this was often not successful.

#### *Working in custody and working in the community: reflections on the 'place' of prison work*

The TSOs reflected on the differences between their work as a TSO compared to their previous roles as prison officers, reflections which prompted them to reevaluate their prior work in the prison and some of the limitations of this. The transition into becoming a TSO was challenging for some staff, as these staff had been prison officers for so long.

You've got to take the officer head off, and you've got to have a totally different head on when you go into Throughcare. (TSO18)

One of the biggest challenges for many of the TSOs was the greater autonomy and the relative lack of structure which came from working in the community. For some staff, particularly those with lengthy experience of working in a prison setting, this was challenging and required a significant period of adaptation:

To go out there [in the community] was really quite scary. See the first few times you went out... It was quite strange. You've worked in an environment that you've always got staff round about you. And suddenly, you're out there, and you're it. And you're having to think on your feet, on your own, and make a decision like that. That's scary, it's really scary. (TSO2)

This points towards an aspect of institutionalisation of prison officers through the visibility and support from other uniformed staff in prison. Maintaining security is the central pillar of prison work in the custodial environment, in a context where people are held in confinement against

their will. For example, Liebling considers “maintain secure custody” as central to the prison officers job (2000: , 338). For TSOs working in the community, the need to no longer be security conscious at all times was a difficult working habit to break. For some TSOs, it was a challenge to set aside their prior professional concern of vigilance and maintaining security:

I was in the job, you know, 20 odd years, before I started working in the community. And, you know, when you first start going out with somebody into the community, you're not cuffed to them, you know, they can walk away from you at any point. If he goes away, then he goes away. And the control bit, as well. What I mean, there's nothing going happen to the guy, and there's nothing going happen to me because he's run away. (TSO10)

Some of the TSOs reflected on the ways in which they had become institutionalized within prisons (cf. Sim, 2008) prior to working in the community. The regularity of prison routine was something that they missed and they took some time to adapt to a working pattern that wasn't as structured. This is a key organising difference between working in custody and community for the TSOs:

The jails run on a clock, so it's half past one the route, I don't need to worry about that anymore. For 28 years half past one the route, at four o'clock the dinner is coming in, just before that the laundry is coming in, exercises at half past three, whatever, it's four o'clock. It was a while, I reckon a good year, maybe more. We were saying this for a year almost every time we went out. (TSO4)

The lack of structure and relative autonomy within the TSO day focused on supporting rehabilitation in the community resulted in more planning than had been required when working in custody. These reflections suggest parallels between their own experiences transitioning to working in the community with the adjustments that people in custody also have when leaving custody for the community; both appear to have become in some senses institutionalized (Sim, 2008).

It was pretty surreal to start with; probably for both myself and the first few service users that we took out because here you are sitting in a coffee shop, he's wearing his own

clothes, I'm wearing my own clothes as opposed to the jail tee-shirt and the white shirt. I think the first few it was probably quite surreal. (TSO6)

This points towards prisons as spaces that shape certain types of work, raising the question: what defines prison officer work more, the place of work or working with those sentenced to custody? The geography of working in the community was also a change for the TSOs, with prisons being one of the most obscured parts of the criminal justice system. The lack of this 'cover' or 'enclosure' provided by the custodial environment was gone and their work had a new visibility in the community:

You're not protected by the four walls. Our work is seen by others, like professional organisations.

There was a sense that the TSO role was in some ways 'bigger' than previous positions within prison, due to the increased visibility, the diverse geographical location, as well as due to different demands in the job. This relates to the TSO role focusing on reintegration as opposed to a prison officer role more narrowly focused:

I know my role's bigger in this role, and it's wider, if you like, and it's more challenging. And I suppose that's maybe some of the things as well, it's about challenging yourself in how you do your work. (TSO20)

This suggests that rehabilitative work in the community is more complex (or bigger) than that in custody. That the TSO role was 'bigger' implies a sense of the importance of this role, it's as if the work in a prison doesn't have the *real* potential for influence that their work in the community did. This represented a challenge for many of the TSOs, one that many seemed to require these staff to develop to meet the new challenges they were facing:

I didn't realise how big the role was. I didn't realise how much it was going to develop into really helping folk and the successes that we see. Everything is bigger. The successes are bigger, you know, everything. It's just a massive, massive job. (TSO4)

Working in a more open environment also prompted a realisation of how restricted their previous work in custody had been. This is something that the TSO only came to realise after experiencing working in the community:

I think you're so used to everything being so contained in [prison] so if you work in the area you are contained pretty much in that area for most of the time. You are contained in your wee flat. (TSO4)

The autonomy and variety that came with supporting rehabilitation in the community as opposed to the structured custodial routine led to a feeling of a job which was diverse and dynamic, which helped their working day 'go quicker':

Today if you're out and about, you're going to meet one guy in the morning, you're maybe going to travel to meet the next guy, the day just flies, it flies in compared with if you're in the halls, for time. (TSO11)

However, while most TSOs enjoyed supporting rehabilitation in the community as opposed to custody, there were aspects of working in the custodial environment which they missed, not least working with colleagues and the solidarity of their professional community (Crawley and Crawley, 2008):

You're out of touch with it, what's happening in the halls, who's in trouble or getting... so you miss the camaraderie between staff and normal... but there's things... there's positives and negatives, and like... and that's one of the things you do miss like. (TSO9)

A fundamental realization that came with supporting rehabilitation in the community was the increased ability to support the service user when not in a prison environment. It was only through supporting rehabilitation in the community that the effects of custody on the relationships with those they are supporting, became apparent.

I think it's so different. I think...see being out and about and having that...because you have a different relationship with the person. You're not locking them up. You know, you're out, you're in the car. It's amazing how much information you get from somebody in the car. (TSO1)

This quote suggests that for this TSO working with people in the community might not just relate to building supportive relationships, but might also still be about collecting intelligence. A number of TSOs felt that time spent in the community was where they could best support people to make positive changes in their lives rather than the custodial environment. This outlines some of the limitations of prisons who conventionally support rehabilitation from within the prison walls:

But it is the right thing, it is what we should be doing. How [can] you support people and sit in a jail? (TSO8)

Relatedly, their work as TSOs allowed them to appreciate that controlling risk was supported by relationships rather than measures aimed at surveillance and security. With some of the people they were working with, two staff were required to work with them due to a feeling that certain people posed more of a risk and were more challenging:

I think I probably feel more vulnerable working the halls [in prison], at the moment. I've got to know those guys [service users] over a period of time, some of them, you know, straight away its two staff with this guy (TSO12)

All of the TSOs interviewed were asked to reflect on how they viewed risk, and whether they felt their work as a TSO was more 'risky' than previous roles within prison given the fact they worked more autonomously and without the security apparatuses of the custodial environment. There was a consensus shared by all of the TSOs interviewed that they had not felt at risk in the community, although they often took precautions and had developed processes to support one another:

I've never felt at risk when I've gone out. If I come across somebody that's been drinking or that, I'll just make my excuses and go. I get myself out of a situation. It's just to be safe like, I think it's quite important, and we'll make sure that we're all finished during the day, we'll phone about each other, say, are you finished for the day, and it's just for safety. (TSO11)

Even though the participants felt that they have fewer 'tools' to keep them safe supporting rehabilitation in the community, they paradoxically feel safer, as a consequence of their location and the shift in their role from control to support. These sorts of challenges and responses to them, are shaped by a large extent to the context in which the TSOs were supporting rehabilitation i.e. the community. This section has shown that TSOs feel that in many respects their roles are different to their previous role as prison officers, which also prompted them to reconsider aspects of possibilities of rehabilitation in prison. This leads onto subsequent areas of consideration, of the way in which working in the community had multiple impacts for the ways in which the TSOs interviewed viewed their role.

## **Conclusion**

In the current article we have illustrated a range of insights into the experiences of TSOs working in the community, that cumulatively constitute a further subversion of the resonance of Goffman's theory of the total institution within the Scottish penal context. Through differences in the place in which these prison staff work which is largely in the community, differences in the types of work and partners worked with, differences in uniform and identity, it is evident that the TSO role is both symbolically and substantively different from prison officer role shaped within the prison walls. Being a TSO has created a space for the prison staff doing this job to reflect on their role as a prison officer, to be more self-aware of the limits of prisons in supporting desistance. It also allowed TSOs to gain a different insight into the challenges relating to the transition from custody to community. The TSOs reflected on what the role of prison is within Scotland and what the impact of imprisonment is for those leaving custody in terms of tertiary desistance and the frequent difficulties in acceptance of communities following release. These reflections facilitate insights into the challenging community justice context within which the SPS and community justice partners are committed to supporting the desistance journey of people leaving custody. Together, TSO's experiences raise important questions about the 'space' of prisons for working with those in custody, and the implications these experiences could have for working within a prison.

The limitations of the study relate to TSOs in some prisons not being able to take part, to the views of people in custody and formerly in custody not being part of this study. Additionally, we were not able to capture and analyse how other actors (such as criminal justice social work) supporting the rehabilitation of those leaving custody viewed throughcare support. In relation to

rehabilitation policy in Scotland, the experiences of the TSOs outlined in this article have been critical in illuminating the challenges of rehabilitation of those leaving custody. However, we have not been able to analyse the implications of other actors delivering throughcare support in Scotland following the SPS pause of throughcare support in July 2019. Further analysis of these changes will enable a consideration of the implications of the SPS delivering this type of support in contrast to other providers. This would allow

Ultimately, the analysis of throughcare support contributes to an understanding of the place of prison within the criminal justice system, through the ways in which the TSOs worked at the edges, of both community and custody. The liminal space within which they work has profound implications for their views on the difficulties of rehabilitation and reintegration. This article contextualises the significance of place in relation to influencing how prison officers feel about their role and their insights into rehabilitation as well as the porousness and place of prisons within the criminal justice sector in Scotland. This article illustrates the benefits of prison officer staff working outside of the prison walls, as this enables new insights into the ways in which prison shapes certain professional practices. While the SPS has currently paused throughcare support, other ways of prison staff getting different insights into the lives of people in custody should be considered. The benefits of staff working within the criminal justice system working in other parts of the system should be further explored in order for staff to develop and having a deeper insight into wider desistance journeys as people pass through the system, and the limitations of certain parts of the system to contribute to desistance journeys. It is through the reflections of the TSOs in this article that some of the limitations prison and staff in prison of supporting people through the process of reintegration after custody become evident. Through analysing novel approaches to supporting resettlement and reintegration such as the TSOs, it is hoped that a greater diversity of approaches to supporting resettlement and reintegration will be explored.

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