

SAFESOC NEWSLETTER

September 2023



The £1.1m UKRI funded [SAFESOC](#) research project aims to reconceptualise prison regulation for safer societies. This difficult multidisciplinary challenge demands academic innovation. Implementation requires sustained collaboration with local and (trans)national practitioners from different sectors (e.g. public, voluntary), regulators, policymakers, and prisoners. Based at the [University of Nottingham](#), SAFESOC is generously funded through Dr Philippa Tomczak's prestigious [UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship](#), and sits within the '[Prisons, Health and Societies](#)' Research Group. This study runs from 2020-2027.

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Project Summary

UKRI SAFESOC project collaboration with UN Special Rapporteur

Dr Philippa Tomczak's £1.1m UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship project has recently encompassed work with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Dr Morris Tidball-Binz. Our activities, including our landmark conference on 'Deaths in Prisons Worldwide' at the

University of Oxford in November 2022 and associated article ([Philippa Tomczak and Róisín Mulgrew, “Making prisoner deaths visible: Towards a new epistemological approach”, Incarceration, vol. 3, No. 1 \(2023\)](#)) supported the first [UN thematic report on deaths in prison in 2023](#).

The 53rd Regular Session of the Human Rights Council took place from 19 June to 14 July 2023. Morris Tidball-Binz issued his report to the General Council giving special acknowledgement of the contributions of Dr Philippa Tomczak and Dr Roisin Mulgrew, University of Galway, regarding the necessity of gathering comprehensive, reliable data on prisoner deaths worldwide ([See Section D, page 14](#)).

In the report, the Special Rapporteur raises awareness of deaths in prisons as an invisible, albeit a largely preventable tragedy of global dimensions, often resulting from a failure in the duty of States to respect and protect the fundamental right to life of those deprived of liberty. While the report focuses on deaths in custody of persons in the criminal justice context from the moment of their arrest, including pretrial and postconviction, its conclusions and recommendations also apply to custodial deaths in other contexts, including immigration and psychiatric detention. The Special Rapporteur has also presented practical recommendations based on best practices described in the report and international standards for the effective investigation and prevention of all deaths in custody.

For more information on our work on this please also refer to our recently launched policy brief on [‘Improving prisoner death investigations and promoting prison safety’](#) (PDF).

European Society of Criminology Conference, September 2023, Florence, Italy

Dr Gill Buck, Dr Cathie Traynor and Dr Rebecca Banwell-Moore, alongside Dr Kaitlyn Quinn made up a panel on participatory and effective prison regulation for safer societies presenting to the European Society of Criminology Conference, September 2023 in Florence, Italy.

Prof Philippa Tomczak, had hoped to give this introduction but unfortunately illness prevented her from making it to Florence.

The papers in the panel were led by individual researchers but were anchored by the aims of the SAFESOC project. Scholars often explore how *prisoners* are regulated and how the criminal justice system works to shape behaviour, but this project innovatively has turned the lens around to understand how a broad range of formal and informal regulators act (*or could act*) in networked ways to shape conditions of imprisonment.

The panel presentation started with Cathie Traynor, who examined the role of documents as prison regulators and in particular how documents can play a role in increasing or reducing prison suicide. Gill Buck then looked at national reviews as a case study of prison regulation, specifically noting women prisoners’ lack of active roles in these activities. Rebecca Banwell-Moore explored prisoner complaints as a potential form of influence, but also considered barriers to meaningful prisoner engagement. And finally, Kaitlyn Quinn considered formal death investigations as a way to communicate failings, with as yet unrealised potential to highlight and seek to address systemic hazards.

Update - Prof Philippa Tomczak



In September 2023, Professor Philippa Tomczak was invited to present leading academic research at the 'NPM (national preventive mechanism) Roundtable: Deaths in custody' conference alongside Seena Fazel, Professor of Forensic Psychiatry, University of Oxford.

Prof Tomczak has recently published an ['Improving prisoner death investigations and promoting prison safety'](#) policy brief, which issues key policy recommendations. This brief will be presented to a large audience of policy makers and parliamentarians, the criminal justice voluntary sector (including prison monitors at all scales), and academics at a forthcoming conference hosted by the SAFESOC project team at the House of Lords in October 2023.

Prof Philippa Tomczak has also published [Tomczak, P., & Mulgrew, R. \(2023\). Making prisoner deaths visible: Towards a new epistemological approach. *Incarceration*, 4.](#)

Dr Tom Kemp's article 'Kemp, T. & Tomczak, P. (2023) The cruel optimism of international prison regulation: prison ontologies and carceral harms', has now been accepted for publication in *Law & Social Inquiry* following his work within the SAFESOC project team until last year. We look forward to seeing the article published in the near future.

Update - Dr Gill Buck



Gill Buck has recently published an article focused on the lived experience of prison regulation:

[Buck, G., Tomczak, P., Harriott, P., Page, R., Bradley, K., Nash, M., & Wainwright, L. \(2023\). Prisoners on prisons: Experiences of peer-delivered suicide prevention work. *Incarceration*.](#)

The article has been selected to feature in Russell Webster's criminal justice blog. The authors were also invited to write about the methodological approach for a special issue of a journal, which is currently under review.

In March 2023, Gill featured on the Lived Experience [Podcast](#) and disseminated findings from an article produced earlier in the year:

[Buck, G., Tomczak, P., & Quinn, K. \(2022\). This is how it feels: Activating lived experience in the penal voluntary sector. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 62\(4\), 822-839.](#)

In July, Gill provided *Suicide First Aid* training, assured by City & Guilds, to the SAFESOC team. Much of our research touches upon suicide and researcher knowledge and care is important. This course covers the theory and practice of suicide intervention, enhancing confidence to intervene with people at risk of suicide. It also introduces the range of supports available to people who find themselves in first aid scenarios.

Gill continues to work on a journal article which examines prisoners' participation in the Corston Report (2007) and The Corston Report Ten Years On (Women in Prison, 2017). She has had an overview of this paper accepted at the European Society of Criminology annual conference (Florence, Sept 2023).

Gill also continues to (co)lead [CRIMVOL](#), the international research network of academics working on voluntary sector criminal justice research.

Update - Dr Rebecca Banwell-Moore



Rebecca is currently working on a paper entitled '**Prisoner death: A toxic cocktail of contributory factors**'. The paper presents the findings of a narrative literature review conducted of international 'prison death' scholarly literature. The paper analyses and synthesizes the limited (inter)national prison death scholarship that delineates the causes and contributory factors of prisoner deaths. The review identified a 'toxic cocktail' of contributory factors. Death in prison is compounded by unique factors e.g. individual prisoner demographics and characteristics; structural; environmental and systems. In the paper Rebecca highlights the complex interplay between these factors to argue that determining, acknowledging and addressing the 'toxic' cocktail of contributory factors to prison death is of great importance as they provide opportunities to save lives and reduce prisoner mortality rates.

Rebecca is also conducting, with the assistance of a student paid placement, quantitative analysis of HMIP Prison survey responses. This work will advance the published prisoner complaints paper (Banwell-Moore, R and Tomczak, P. (2022) [Complaints: Mechanisms for prisoner participation?](#) *European Journal of Criminology*.). The findings of this quantitative analysis were presented at the European Society of Criminology conference held in September 2023.

Rebecca has continued in her role as Data Management Lead for the UKRI team, ensuring the effective data management and repository of all research data and publications.

Rebecca has had a co-authored article and a co-authored book chapter accepted for publication:

Marder, I., Banwell-Moore, R., Hobson, J. and Payne, B. (2023) *New Ideas, Enduring Cultural Barriers? An Analysis of Recommendations from the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Restorative Justice in England and Wales*. Criminology and Criminal Justice (forthcoming – accepted for publication).

Skinns, L., Banwell-Moore, R., Rice, L., and Wooff, A. Researching police custody: Past, present and future In: Tong, S & Martin, D (eds). *Introduction to Policing Research: Taking Lessons from Practice*. 2nd ed (forthcoming – accepted for publication).

Update - Dr Cathie Traynor



Cathie has continued to work on an article on the agency of documents in prison regulation using Shaw's 'independent professional advice on the prevention of self-inflicted deaths and self-harm at HMP Woodhill' as a case study. She was delighted to receive encouraging feedback and helpful input from Professor Nick Hardwick and Dr. Jamie Bennett at the SAFESOC Advisory Board Meeting in early June. This helped enormously in preparation for presenting the paper at the European Society of Criminology Conference in Florence in September.

Update - Sara Hyde



Sara continues to write up her thesis on the experiences and impacts of prisoner suicide and self-harm on prison healthcare staff. She has presented initial findings at the Institute for Mental Health, at University of Edinburgh's Suicide Cultures conference and the British Society of Criminology conference.

Join Our Team

Philippa particularly welcomes inquiries from prospective collaborators, postdoctoral researchers, PhD students and voluntary organisations seeking to analyse the following areas: death in criminal justice detention; (prisoner) death investigations; [the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman](#); Coroner [Prevention of Future Death reports](#) relating to state detention; intersections between imprisonment, mental health detention and immigration detention; prison(er) health; prisoner healthcare; prison safety.

Contact Us

To find out more or to be kept informed about the progress of this work, please email:

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