



SAFESOC Annual Advisory Group Meeting

Thursday 8th June 2023 13.30-15.00

Dr Gill Buck gave an overview of work done to date and articles published. The team's articles and outputs can be accessed [here](#). SAFESOC's lead investigator Dr Philippa Tomczak has been promoted to Professor of Criminology at the University of Nottingham. She also received a 'Young Criminologist' award from the European Society of Criminology. The SAFESOC team have been busy publishing papers and attending conferences. Sara Hyde recently presented at the Edinburgh Suicide Cultures Conference on the experiences of prison healthcare staff. At the end of 2022, the whole team delivered a Death in Prisons conference at the University of Oxford. The conference highlighted the scale of known deaths in prison and made the case for more robust data collection internationally.

Dr Cathie Traynor gave a presentation on 'Documents as regulators in Shaw's review of prison suicide'. She received responses from Jamie Bennet (Youth Justice Board) and Nick Hardwick (Royal Holloway University of London). Jamie noted that actor network theory is an interesting approach which recognises the interplay between structure, agency, and culture in how institutions function. It also highlights the diverse ways documents and policies have been used by people. Nick encouraged critical reflection on use of the word 'regulation' and how it is distinct from recommendations and accountability.

Dr Gill Buck presented: The Corston Report: Centring women prisoners' voices in networked, participatory regulation? She received responses from Paula Harriott (Prison Reform Trust) and Nina Champion (Criminal Justice Alliance). Paula noted how the paper problematises the framing of women as victims, as they are then not foregrounded to lead change. When women in prison internalise these labels, it can stymie activism and result in systemic

inaction. Nina noted how there is a need to consider intersectionality and racial discrimination. Drawing on collaborations in the USA she advocated for a number of alliances but observed that actors often don't work together. To foster coalitions, we need to move from 'ego-system' to ecosystem.

Rebecca Banwell-Moore presented: 'Prisoner death, a toxic cocktail of contributory factors'. She received responses from Soruche Saajedi (Prison Reform Trust) and Miranda Davies (Nuffield Trust). Soruche observed how little agency people in prison have regarding factors such as health. The quality of food and healthcare provision can vary locally and often the system locks into a pattern of deteriorating health. Policy decisions can intersect with this, for example the number of prisoners who took their own lives when the decision was made not to resentence IPP prisoners. Miranda appreciated Rebecca's clear presentation of big picture challenges facing the prison system, which has high rates of staff leaving or off sick and high numbers of prisoner outpatient appointments missed. Given people are dying from known risk factors, she asked what is the purpose of prison?

The advisory group concluded with an open discussion, which focused on the need to understand strengths and protective factors in addition to risk factors (e.g., education, food and wellbeing initiatives; full staff quotas; well supported staff; lower prison populations). There was also an important point to keep an international focus as problems of overcrowding and inadequate staff levels are not unique to the UK.

For updates on the work of the team, please visit <https://www.safesoc.co.uk/>