Practitioner Lessons for Ensuring a Positive Transitional Phase between Work in Prison and after Release

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The transition from prison to community has been noted as one of the most crucial times for individuals incarcerated for terrorism and terrorism related offences. This transition period has been identified by RAN, as well as in the academic literature, as a key opportunity to provide a foundation for later success (Western et al., 2015), both in terms of the risk of recidivism but also in terms of successful reintegration. There are a myriad of factors that influence this transition period, one of which is the type of conviction; others include the quality of supports available, personal factors, family situation etc. In this report, the transition of individuals convicted of terrorism and terrorism related offences will be considered as they attempt to join or re-join a community after time in prison. Primarily, the experience of practitioners will inform this report, but it will also draw on the academic literature, grey literature, and survey data. The report aims to highlight the key challenges identified by practitioners and how these challenges can be overcome.

Glossary

CVE (countering violent extremism): interventions at multiple levels that aim to interrupt efforts to encourage individuals to participate in TPV, as well as broader community initiatives that increase resilience to involvement in TPV.

Extremism: the holding of extreme ideological views and the engagement in extreme behaviour in support of these views.

Formers: individuals who were previously involved in terrorism and political violence and who have ended their involvement in TPV.

Justice-involved persons: individuals who are currently in prison, who have left prison, who are engaged with probation or parole agencies, or are pre-conviction/post charge.

Practitioner: (for the purpose of this study) any individual who engages in criminal justice work linked to TPV. This includes individuals who work with clients as well as those engaged in administrative and policy work in this area.

PVE (preventing violent extremism): interventions aimed at targeting individuals/groups/communities prior to engagement in or escalation of engagement with TPV.

Terrorism and terrorism related: a catch-all phrase to refer to individuals convicted of specific terrorism offences, but also individuals who are known to be involved in TPV but have been convicted under related (but not specifically terrorism) legislation.

TPV (terrorism and political violence): this term is used in this study to incorporate all behaviours defined as terrorism and political violence that are proscribed under national and international law.

Transition phase: the process of moving from prison to community for individuals convicted of terrorism and terrorism related offences.

Introduction

How we understand and respond to terrorism is an issue that has caused very significant debate amongst academic researchers and practitioners alike. In the aftermath of 9/11, there was a flurry of activity in an effort to understand how and why the attackers perpetrated the violence, what motivated them and who supported them; a vast body of literature was produced attempting to answer these questions (Silke 2001). As the most recent wave of violence in Europe escalated, arguably starting with the Madrid train bombings in 2004 (Iulian 2017), attempts to understand and counter terrorism continued (Schuurman, 2018), with a focus on the ideology of the perpetrators (Holbrook and Horgan, 2019), their identity (Schwartz, Dunkel and Waterman, 2009), broader social issues such as immigration (Helbling and Meierrieks, 2022) and foreign policy (Savun and Phillips, 2009) as well as mental health (Corner, Gill, Schouten and Farnham, 2018) and peer networks (Hwang, 2018). In the years following the 9/11 attacks there was a significant increase in the number of individuals being incarcerated for terrorism and related offences and with this came concerns regarding interventions in prison (Hart, 2020), deradicalisation options, desistance from violent groups followed by the concerns regarding the potential for radicalisation contagion effect in prisons (Chantraine

and Scheer, 2020; Zahn, 2016). More recently, due both to the high profile incidences of individuals perpetrating attacks who were previously in prison for terrorism offences (Hodwitz, 2019; Altier, Leonard Boyle and Horgan, 2019), there has been renewed concern regarding the *risk* of recidivism for terrorist offenders (Hasisi, B., Carmel, T., Weisburd, D. et al, 2020). This has become a significant issue, predominantly because a large number of individuals incarcerated in recent years are due to be released after serving long sentences in European prisons (Silke and Morrison, 2020). In addition, there continues to be the risk and recidivism issue around individuals returning from previously held ISIS territory in Syria and Iraq, many of whom ultimately serve short sentences, as well as others who managed to return unnoticed (Malet and Hayes, 2020).

The two overarching issues that dominate discussions about prison and the release from prison of individuals incarcerated for terrorism or related offences continues to be the recidivism risk and the process of transition to a life in a community (Sumpter, Wardhani & Priyanto, 2021; Cherney, 2021). The risk of recidivism receives significant attention both because of the deadly outcome of terrorist violence, but also because of the political framing of the risk of terrorism (Huysmans and Buonfino, 2008; Mythen and Walklate, 2006). The transition from prison to community receives comparatively less attention, unless it is framed as a process of managing risk (Webber, Chernikova Molinario, and Kruglanski, 2020).

The Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) (Hansen and Lid, 2020; Williams, 2016; RAN Rehabilitation Working Group, 2021; RAN, 2018) has recognised that, given there will be a steady stream of individuals being released from prison over the next few years, understanding how best to facilitate the successful transition from prison to community should be a priority for governments and local authorities alike. Much has been written about how this transition should be approached, specifically in the case of TPV, but also of relevance is the vast body of work on prison to community transitions for all categories of prisoner (Hawken and Kleinman, 2016; Marsden 2015; Sreenivasan, Rosenthal, Smee et al, 2018). Law, penology, criminology, and psychology are amongst the disciplines that have much to contribute to our understanding of these transitions (Visher and Travis, 2003; Hopkin, G., Evans-Lacko, S., Forrester, A. et al. 2018; Zivanai and Mahlangu, 2022)). In addition to the research that has been produced, the experience of practitioners is vital for how we understand and conceptualise transitions from prison to community (RAN, 2021; Walkenhorst, Baaken et al, 2018). Over the past number of years, through working group meetings, RAN has sought to bring together these practitioners in an effort to capture this vital experience as a means of enhancing understanding and sharing best practices across institutions and countries. A range of papers, handbooks, and reports have been produced on the basis of these events (see bibliography). The focus is most often on practical challenges: how practitioners should consume academic research, how research is relevant in their domain, and how best to share experiences with fellow practitioners across Europe. In recognition of the importance of the transition from prison to community for those convicted of terrorism and related offences, RAN has commissioned this piece of work, which focuses specifically on gathering practitioner experiences of transition in an effort to understand the issues as they emerge on the journey from prison to community. This paper is focused on practitioners' perspectives and specifically on their experience of the transition from prison to community. The paper will share the practitioner accounts both good and bad and highlight the issues that dominate the transition experiences of prison, probation, and support staff across Europe.

Given the range of academic publications and grey literature, including RAN publications of relevance to this area, this report will first situate the current report in the main themes and challenges known to dominate the field. It will then document the accounts of practitioners collated via interviews, surveys, and workshops, and, finally, share the recommendations of the participants alongside some gaps identified and possible future directions.

The state of play of transition research

Research on prisons, and in particular on prison populations, has a long history with the focus ranging from alternatives to prison, prison regime rehabilitation, desistance, addiction and the transition out of prison (Dünkel, 2017). A particular strength of European research on prisons is also the centrality of human rights discourses (ibid). A key aspect of this approach is the focus on prison as a last resort, as well as alternatives to imprisonment (ibid). Dünkel (2017) highlights that this is a point of departure for European criminology, as opposed to American criminology where deterrence (including long sentences) was traditionally the norm

until recently (Brangan, 2020). There are, of course, many different perspectives in Europe on the role of prison in society, the definition of 'last resort' and what rehabilitation looks like (Daems, 2020), and, in the context of understanding how extremism is part of this story, the long history of research on prisons is highly relevant. The focus of this paper is an attempt to understand prison and the transition from prison for individuals incarcerated for terrorism and related offences in isolation. A key issue in attempting to understand this journey is the importance of individual factors and social factors; there is no overarching framework that will explain the process for *all* individuals leaving prison; each journey is idiosyncratic. Importantly, in addition to the individual and social factors, what goes on in prisons and during the transition from prison, is, amongst other things, a reflection of prison policy, national crime policy, decriminalisation of certain crimes, funding, individual needs, sentencing patterns (short versus long sentences) and the ideological (and historical) positions of policy makers. It is vital that this ecosystem is understood in its entirety in order to plan for and maximise the likelihood of a successful transition.

The reality of 'success'!

Often, success is seen in black and white terms – either an individual succeeds and starts their life back in society, or they reoffend and end up back in prison. The assumption exists that an unsuccessful transition for individuals convicted of terrorism/extremism will lead to the individual engaging in terrorist acts (Sumpter, Wardhanib, and Priyanto, 2021). However, as will be discussed in this paper, success can be incremental, and signs of success are often more mundane than remarkable. But it is important to recognise that success may manifest itself in very small steps – for example, an individual successfully managing necessary day to day activities. Being able to cope with the routine activities of daily life is a key part of the likely success of a transition process. Research on transitioning points to the importance of successful community involvement, reintegration, positive family relationships, as well as securing meaningful employment and safe housing. These steps are all part of the incremental long-term process that will enable an individual to reduce recidivism over their lifetime (Valentine and Redcross, 2015). In effect, while transition traditionally refers to a defined period of time, in effect, it is a long-term process.

While there is significant data available on the transition experiences of the *general* prison population, there is comparatively little information available regarding individuals convicted for terrorism or terrorism related offences. Often, success is categorised according to things that are tangible and can be measured, giving a very limited picture of what success might be (Barrenger, Kriegel, Canada and Wilson, 2021).Usually, the focus is on recidivism rates. In the literature on terrorism and political violence, there is general agreement that the recidivism rate for those convicted of terrorism offences is substantially lower than for apolitical offences (Hodwitz, 2019): the cases of Northern Ireland, Spain, and Indonesia are illuminating. In the case of Northern Ireland, a large scale prison release scheme was part of the peace process brokered between governments to bring about an end to the hostilities. Research by McEvoy, Shirlow and McElrath (2004; Bryson, McEvoy and Albert, 2021) examines the post-prison experience of these individuals, including reengagement in violence and recidivism, and found the recidivism rate to be close to 10% for those imprisoned for TPV. In the case of Indonesia, 650 individuals convicted of involvement in TPV (Sumpter, Wardhanib, and Priyanto, 2021) were found to have a recidivism rate of approximately 10%. Furthermore, in the USA, of the 247 inmates convicted for terrorism (and related) offences who were released by 2018, a recidivism rate of 1.6% was recorded (Hodwitz, 2021). These data demonstrate that reoffending rates in the case of terrorism are substantially lower than for other types of convictions. Again, it is important to remember here that there are individual, community, societal and political factors at play. It might be worth considering the role of communities in facilitating the reintegration of individuals incarcerated for TPV. For example, in Northern Ireland, on release from prison individuals were, in many cases, welcomed back to their communities. In addition, they had access to housing through family and friends, they often had family support, and even had access to either a job or some income support. A similar scenario was often witnessed in Basque country. It is worth considering how this transition experience might contribute to the low recidivism rates witnessed in this population. Of course, many other factors are at play here, and, in many instances of TPV, the individuals are treated as social pariahs (Rufaedah and Putra, 2018) and this impacts their transition experience.

Many countries have de-radicalisation programmes, CVE initiatives and other related interventions (Dean, Lloyd et al 2018). The impact of these interventions is difficult to determine in an objective way, but data from a range of jurisdictions (see above) points to a low recidivism rate in the case of TPV, regardless of whether

or not any interventions were used. What this means is that, for the individuals in question, the type of offence committed is relevant for the transition from prison to community because, in the case of apolitical crimes, recidivism is significantly higher. However, very significant longitudinal data would be required to verify this idea, and, at this point, it is difficult to determine to what degree any interventions play a positive – or even negative – role in the successful transition for the individuals in question. It is worth noting here that things are not always black and white – many individuals have multiple convictions, some for TPV and some for *ordinary crime.* Furthermore, convictions for TPV range from murder to fundraising to glorification, and the individuals convicted can be lone actors or part of a group. Therefore, while conviction type is evidently important, we should not focus solely on conviction type as a means of understanding the process of transition.

In addition to the nuance of the individual and their context, when thinking about the transition from prison to community it is important that we focus on the long term. Achieving success is a long term endeavour and there is a need for sustained support for and engagement with the individuals in question. It was widely recognised by the participants in this study that transition was a very long term, if not a lifelong issue – this will be discussed later.

Methodology

This paper is based on semi-structured interview data (n=9), survey data (n=6) and workshop/focus group data (n=12)[1]. Ethics permission for this data collection was granted from the Social Research Ethics Committee (SREC) at University College Cork (UCC) Ireland[1]. Consent was sought from all participants and anonymity was offered to all participants[1]. Some were happy to have their names included, others preferred not to be identified, but to ensure that all participants were not identifiable it was decided to anonymise all participant names and identifying information, roles and country locations. Interviews were carried out using Microsoft Teams and recorded on that platform. Video files were deleted once the conversations were transcribed. Anonymised text files of the interview data were saved as per SREC guidelines. Survey data was collected using *EU survey*, a link was shared with workshop/focus group participants and at no point was personal information collected. The workshop/focus group was held online and was hosted by RAN and thematic notes were taken, anonymised and then used to inform the conclusions in this report.

Framing the issues: Practitioner versus literature perspectives

In order to understand how transition is understood, a review of all P/CVE-relevant academic and grey literature was conducted. This included a specific review of related RAN publications and reports. This analysis was conducted to understand the key issues in the field, but also to examine any differences between academic and practitioners' approaches to the issue. While it may seem *natural* to expect differences between academic and practitioner perspectives, at the root of these differences lies a gap in assumptions, expectations and possibilities. This gap has long been recognised by RAN and underpins the rationale for this paper. The voices of practitioners are often absent from research, or secondary to the theorising that occurs as part of the research process; this is a gap that should be addressed.

The difference between *research* and *practice* is a very real issue in our efforts to understand P/CVE, and a key part of this are the limitations that structures place on implementing evidence based interventions. For example, we may have a high-quality intervention, evidence based and ready for a specific population, however, if the funding is lacking, if the criminal justice professionals cannot participate in the necessary training, and if the policy makers believe it gives the wrong message to the public, the intervention is doomed to fail. Another significant issue in the gap between practitioners and researchers/research output is the assumptions that underpin both. Needs, ideological assumptions, and priorities are often at odds or, at best, different. For example, the security priorities of criminal justice professionals (e.g., prison guards) may not lend themselves to engaging in particular interventions; the ratio of staff to justice-involved individuals (prison/probation) may be unmanageable; the prison culture may not support rehabilitation efforts etc. Understanding these gaps, understanding how research and practice can speak to each other about the issues that matter, and understanding how knowing and doing are intimately related will enable a more collaborative process between research and practice.
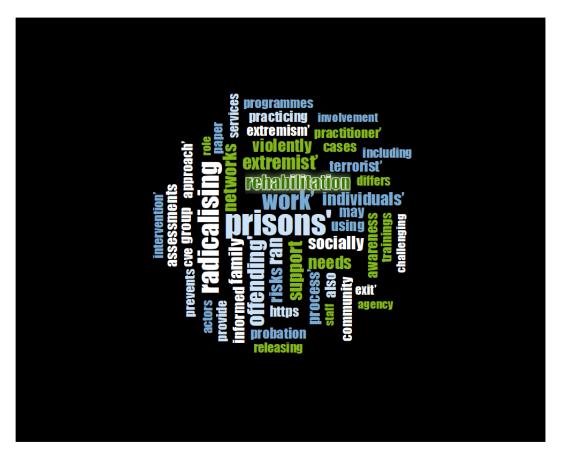
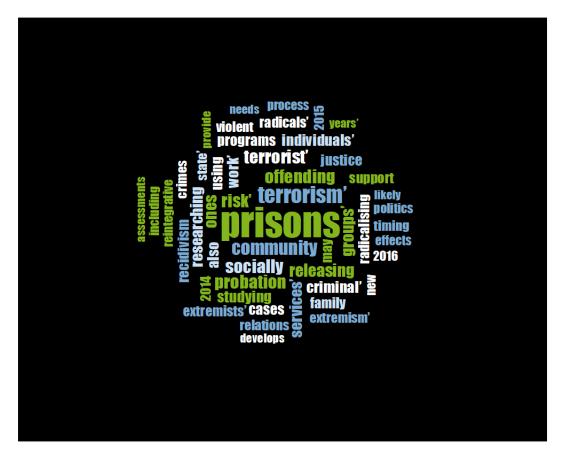**Figure 1: Word cloud frequency RAN papers/report**

Figure 2: Word cloud academic papers frequencies analysis

What we can infer from this analysis of both RAN publications and the academic literature (in a very general way) is that there are different frames being used in RAN (practitioner focused)[1] and academic (research)[2] publications. Most likely, the 'RAN' frames are focused on radicalisation and terrorism, given the focus of the work in general, whereas in the academic papers included here, the focus is on more general issues related to the criminal justice system and the prison and probation services more broadly. What we found in the analysis overall was mental health, gender, employment, and housing did not feature prominently, and issues with criminal justice staff hardly featured at all. This would seem to indicate that the concerns of criminal justice professionals as expressed in this study do not feature prominently in the literature and publications on P/CVE.

Below, we will discuss the themes and issues that emerged from an analysis of the data collected directly from criminal justice and PVE/CVE professionals. The issues that emerge highlight how the needs, concerns, limitations, and conceptualisations of practitioners are very much linked to their day to day experiences and the realities of their profession. It is clear from the analysis that the structures and norms of the criminal justice systems are often the key drivers and limitations when dealing with the transition from prison to community for individuals incarcerated for TPV, as discussed below.

Challenges in current practice – a review of the main themes

Table 1: Interview participant information

	Country	Role	Gender
1	Ireland	Prison Officer	Male
2	Ireland	NGO support worker	Female
3	Ireland	NGO support worker	Male
4	Ireland	Probation officer	Male
5	Spain	Statutory support worker	Female
6	France	Statutory support worker	Male
7	Norway	Prison officer	Male
8	Northern Ireland	Police	Male
9	Romania	Social work researcher	Male

P/CVE: Does conviction type matter?

The discussions conducted as part of this study were dominated by conversations about the challenges faced by the practitioners. What was striking was that the participants all agreed that they only see one small part of the transition process, and they are predominantly unaware of what happens outside of their direct experience. For example, the participants spoke about never hearing about the individuals who made a successful transition and those who did not, or what their success or failure looked like. While the aim of this

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[1] A word frequency analysis was conducted in NVIVO of relevant RAN papers, reports and meeting notes between 2018 to 2022 that dealt with TPV in prison, probation and in the transition back into community (n = 26 papers).
[2] The academic literature deemed relevant in this study was based on a Scopus and Google Scholar search for articles published after 2017 based on the search criteria CVE/PVE and prisons AND probation AND transition AND community (including all related stemmed words). The word frequency analysis was again carried out in NVIVO.

study was to understand lessons for a successful transition from prison to community, most of the individuals who participated in this study were limited to their own direct experience of transition in their own area of the criminal justice system. This istelling of how the system operates predominantly in silos as mentioned by the participants themselves.

'It is quite difficult. It is quite difficult for us to gauge what happens on the outside once they are released.'[3]

Another key challenge that emerged in conversation with the participants was the issue of conviction type and how it influenced how they treated those convicted of TPV. The issue was whether or not it matters what someone is convicted of. In terms of risk and intervention options, the type of conviction is relevant, but outside of this, for the criminal justice professionals working day to day with those incarcerated for TPV, the conviction type is also seen as important in a general way. The question, however, seems to be whether or not it impacts the way they interact with the individual. The results of the analysis of the practitioner interviews and surveys reveals that all but two of the participants in this study believed radicalisation/extremism and/or terrorism to be the key framework for understanding and dealing with individuals experiencing the transition from prison to probation. That said, for those individuals working in prisons, the issues faced by this population were the same issues faced by all individuals being released from prison. For criminal justice professionals working outside prison, the conviction type was *more* relevant but they were still predominantly guided in their planning by referring to *normal* prison and probation transition issues. Of particular note was the stigma of being labelled a *terrorist* and how this impacted the transition process for an individual.

'Often, it doesn't matter what they are there [in prison] for.'

Conviction type and transition need – issues beyond the individual

While not dismissing the idiosyncrasies of dealing with individuals incarcerated for terrorism and terrorism related offences, the participants were quick to point out that the problems and barriers they face and the priorities they recognise were most often common to all individuals facing transition from prison to community. Issues linked to criminal justice policy, discrepancies between national and local needs, and problems with or the absence of multi-agency approaches were all issues for the participants. In addition, what they found to be a specific issue in the case of TPV was the securitisation of these individuals and the impact it had on their transition experience.

'The influence of national level policy on the day to day realities cannot be underestimated.'

'When management of cases is dominated by a security approach, the other multiagency elements are less involved.'

'Local idiosyncrasies are relevant, national provisions don't always account for these.'

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[3] All quotes used are taken from the individual interviews with criminal justice professionals.

Data sharing and continuity of care

In addition to the local/national issues, the participants pointed out that information sharing at agency or institutional level was very problematic. Data sharing, continuity of care with individuals and multiagency cooperation were difficult to achieve; a lack of coordination and communication between immigration agencies and probation services was often noted. An example was given where a transition plan was put in place at multiagency level, but measures taken by immigration services on release often scuppered the intervention plans. This was particularly the case for professionals working in border regions.

'We work in silos, basically. And so, I mean, I think that one of our weaknesses is the lack of communication between different administrations and structures.'

Community and belonging during transition

In terms of how the issues are understood, across the RAN papers, the academic papers, and the practitioner interviews, there was a common understanding that community and belonging was hugely important to a successful transition. This was important because of the inevitability of individuals having to return to an existing or new community upon release.

While prison served an important reprieve for some individuals, this was predominantly due to a lack of suitable services in the community. Access, particularly to addiction treatment and mental health services while in prison, was often seen as *lifesaving.* In addition, the opportunity to 'knife off' (Maruna, 2001) problematic friends/gangs and family was also seen as relevant by the practitioners in this study.

'I was surprised at how many of them say if I was not in prison now, I would be dead.'

'The [right-wing] gangs are in here [prison] also.'

Community issues in the transition process

- Family/friends in the community being both risk and resilient factors.
- Tertiary desistance (a sense of belonging to a community).
- Issues of support, belonging, and identity (e.g., racism and Islamophobia in the community).
- Community issues being brought into prison (drugs, gangs, conflict issues).
- Prison being a reprieve from issues in the community (drugs, gangs, paramilitary groups etc).

Being accepted back into the community – tertiary desistance

The participants in this study saw the issue of community as very significant during the transition out of prison. We know from the literature on desistance that tertiary desistance (McNeill, 2006; Ugelvik, 2022) is a central part of the process of reintegration and desistance (Maruna, 2001).

Tertiary desistance refers to how and if a community can receive an individual back into society after time in prison. It also implies a sense of belonging to a community.

Earlier, we mentioned the stigma associated with involvement in terrorism, and the participants in this study felt that there was an increased burden on individuals who were incarcerated for terrorism offences given the perception of terrorism in society. However, this was not always the case, and in the case of separatist terrorism, based on the experience of the participants, often times individuals were welcomed back into their community. Some participants also pointed out that there were more significant difficulties for individuals associated with Islamist extremism as opposed to, for example, right-wing extremism. This was related to intersectional issues such as anti-immigrant sentiment in society, Islamophobia and perceptions of Islamist extremism as an existential threat in a way that the extreme right-wing is not.

In addition, the participants spoke about the lack of clarity regarding individuals imprisoned who were associated with the right-wing. They revealed that the overlap with gang activity in prison and the community complicated this issue and diluted the apparent relevance of ideology; this was also the case in separatist terrorism. One additional issue that emerged around the issue of stigma came from one participant who had seen that community acceptance differed according to ethnicity. In his experience, minority communities, who had already experienced being *outsiders*, were more likely to provide support to an individual transitioning out of prison. This is of course anecdotal, but it points to a key issue and the context should not be discounted when considering the process of transition.

'We have to remember we are dealing with a lot of diversity here, online offences, travel to Syria, right-wing. Extremists are not all violent – and that's a particular thing.'

'The stigma, usually for these sorts of crimes is stronger than for regular crimes because most of the time it is not only stigma, but it's also fear [of terrorism].'

Gender and transition

Finally, an issue that emerged in these interviews, which does not feature prominently in either of the word frequency analyses, is gender. Increasingly in the literature, gender is featured in relation to returning foreign fighters from Syria (often referenced in relation to returning mothers and children) as well as masculinity, particularly in relation to the right-wing and incels, but in this analysis it did not feature prominently. For the participants in this study, gender, predominantly as it relates to women, was recognised as being an important issue. There was little direct experience of dealing with women incarcerated for terrorism or terrorism related offences, but a widespread recognition that within the criminal justice system, women had different needs and often more complex needs in the transition phase.

In terms of masculinity, there was a recognition amongst participants that problematic manifestations of masculinity played a role in dealing with men as they transitioned from prison to communities, and this had the potential to derail interventions attempted both in prison and the community. This was linked to both ideology (the right-wing in particular) in terms of the expectations of masculinity, but also to gangs and the implications that performative masculinity had for identity in gangs more generally. One practitioner spoke

about the need to work with individuals on how certain manifestations of masculinity were a barrier to a successful transition, and the ability to transition into or back into a community.

'Masculinity is a survival mechanism, a way to navigate their communities that has served a purpose. Its drinking, fighting, drugs, aggressiveness, always dabbling in some form of deviance whether its drugs, or whatever.'

In terms of women, while the experience of the participants in this study was limited as it applied to extremism and terrorism, some of the participants had significant experience working with women in prison and through probation organisations. Two key issues emerged in the discussion on the transition for women: the notion of double deviance and the issue of complex needs.

Double deviance: The theory that women are treated more harshly by the criminal justice system because they are seen as being guilty of a crime but also guilty of violating gender norms (e.g. expectations regarding how a women should behave).

With regards to the issue of complex needs, caring responsibilities and intimate relationships were mentioned. Having caring responsibilities made the transition more complex, for example knifing off was often not an option when children were involved. As regards intimate relationships, justice-involved women were very likely to have experienced domestic violence and other abuse; this made transitioning complex due to housing needs and trauma-linked outcomes.

'The more we study, the more we realise that we need a special approach compared to men.'

'Services are designed for men.'

'When men and women are in shared [support] services, women tend to stay away.'

'Women have a lot more going on, a lot more trauma.'

Structural barriers to transition

In terms of the transition, all of the participants in this study referred to structural issues as significant barriers to successful transition. Housing, access to support services outside of prison, addiction treatment, continuity of care, and the urban-rural divide were repeatedly mentioned. Housing was particularly noted as a problem. Poor planning, lack of available housing, and discrimination were mentioned as issues. In one case, a local municipality voted to exclude those with criminal convictions from its housing list. In other cases, housing near friends and family was not made available, thereby impacting the potential for social support. Often, only short-term housing was provided, leaving the individuals in a precarious living situation on release.

'Homeless services are chaotic.'

Training of prison officers and their suitability

As might be expected, the range of individuals who are employed in prisons and probation services is exceptionally diverse. Individuals come to these roles with a variety of personal and professional experiences that impact their daily interactions and approaches to the individuals in their care. The participants in this study all pointed out the need to recognise this, but also to recognise that that not all staff were suitable for all cases. This was thought to be due, on the one hand, to a lack of experience, or a lack of education on issues of terrorism and extremism, but also, as one individual put it, due to 'personality' type. While it is difficult to quantify what 'personality' means in this context, participants felt some prison officers were more suited than others to working with those convicted of TPV. They pointed out the need for compassion, education, and being able to model pro-social behaviour as key qualities. Many of the participants felt that, while education was important, a focus on recognising radicalisation in prison or identifying indicators of radicalisation was usually insufficient to enable meaningful engagement with individuals incarcerated for terrorism.

'Prison officers receive education – but it is superficial, I and they are not set up to deal with it [radicalisation].'

'Some individuals are not suited to that type of work.'

'Education very much focused on radicalisation in prison, looking for signs.'

'You need to communicate in the right way.'

One participant in this study clearly articulated what he saw to be the prison officer's role in dealing with individuals incarcerated for TPV. He described it as positive behaviour modelling and relationship building. His experience was that, regardless of conviction type, individuals in prison thrived on respect, earing trust, learning how to have a positive relationship, and achieving recognition for small gains. He felt this was achievable in the prison setting. With regards to implementing P/CVE initiatives in prison, he pointed out that there needs to be clarity around the expectations of change in the prison setting, realism about what can be achieved, and some specifics regarding the role of the prison and support officer in this process. He pointed out that complex interventions for specific conviction categories (e.g., sexual offences/terrorism etc.) were commonplace, but ultimately, the fundamentals of good prison management and a human rights approach to dealing with individuals in prison were the priorities.

'A lot of what we already know and the way we work with people and treat them is transferable.'

In terms of transition, participants saw the interpersonal soft skills learned in prison as fundamental to enabling a positive transition and setting an individual up for longer term success. They pointed out that, generally, individuals serving time in prison lacked positive role models and that providing them was an achievable aim for prison officers and other criminal justice professionals.

Table 2: Survey results

Barriers to a successful transition	What is success?	Are there specific issues with extremism?	Can change happen in prison?	What is the role of prison /support workers?	Are there specific issues for women?	Is ideology relevant?
Lack of preparation for release	Employment	Intersectional issues with immigration sanctions	Variable	Preparation for release	Limited experience	Predominantly yes
Lack of follow up post-prison	Education	Extra support is often available	Yes, but positive and negative change	Prison officers can offer positive behavioural modelling	Issue of stigma felt more strongly	Interventions should be tailored to the individual belief system
Personal vulnerabilities (mental health, addiction, family)	Short term desistance	Social perceptions are more problematic (stigma)	Yes - but often only because in prison there are support services available that are not available in the community		Complex issues with family and caring	Ideology matters in so much as society and government have different and unequal ways of dealing with Islamist extremism and right-wing extremism
Expectation management issues for prisoners and authorities	Long term desistance		Escape the need to perform in a certain way in the community (e.g., violence, feuding, retaliation)		Issue of trauma and returning to problematic living arrangements	Ideology only matters if it genuinely matters to the individual
Lack of coordination pre/during the transition (multi-agency)	Personal /psychological growth		Gang culture is a negative influence in prison		Social perception of women as victims rather than as perpetrators	Ideological issues intersect with gang membership, and this creates issues on release for rehabilitation and rehoming etc.
Basic needs not being met	Openness to engagement in society		The duration of the sentence has a particular impact			
Impatience	Less serious offending					
	Seeking to lead an honest life					

Recommendations and Considerations

In order to achieve a successful transition, the following key recommendations and considerations from the interviews, workshop, and survey conducted for this study should be taken into account.

The individual context

The individual must be motivated to engage and open to change.

- Actions
  - Patience is essential to encouraging this process, change is a slow, incremental process.
  - A meaningful relationship/bond with the same interventionist over the medium term is necessary.

Imagining a new self (identity) is a key part of this process. How an individual is treated and the opportunities they are given to engage in personal development is key to being able to imagine a more positive future self.

- Actions
  - Good behaviour modelled by criminal justice professionals can play a role here.
  - Enabling the individual to take steps to build trust with those around them is important to their sense of self (e.g., incremental increase in responsibilities, access to job schemes etc.).

Family must be a key element in transition planning. Families offer both risk and resilient factors, it is important to identify which they are.

- Actions
  - A separate intervention service in the community should engage with families about the needs of the person transitioning and the capacity of the family to offer support or not.

Family support services should be available to enable families to support the individual transitioning.

- Actions
  - Family counselling, psycho-education, mentor support, or befriending services are all options.

Services are predominantly developed for men and are often not suitable for women transitioning out of prison.

- Actions
  - Management of caring responsibilities (e.g., childcare options) needs to be planned.
  - Trauma informed interventions should be available.
  - Suitable (family and/or sheltered) housing should be made available.
  - Support with relationship management should be made available to women.
  - The suitability of mixed services should be considered, as these often dissuade women from getting support.

Understanding when and how ideology matters is important.

- Actions
  - Interventions do not always need to be designed around ideological issues. Each individual has a nuanced relationship with their chosen political ideology and how it impacts their life and behaviour. This should be determined when choosing interventions and interventionists.
  - Toxic masculinity and hegemonic masculinities are often barriers to a successful transition regardless of political ideology. This needs to be addressed in a bespoke way via mentoring, with social/support workers or with formers or clerics.
  - Modelling of positive behaviour (including non-violent conflict resolution) by criminal justice professionals has a role to play in addressing problematic manifestations of masculinity.

Making a connection at an individual level is important as an individual moves through the criminal justice system.

- Actions:
  - Offering pro-social behaviour modelling is anecessary and useful intervention that can be achieved in the prison environment.
  - Ensuring support workers follow the individual through the criminal justice system and into the transition phase is important for support and building trust.

Expectations regarding achieving change in a prison setting should be realistic and individualised.

- Actions
  - Recognise what success looks like for an individual.
  - Recognise that success is incremental and a long term process.
  - Recognise that success is not a linear path.

Impatience is a barrier.

- Actions
  - Take a long term view of the process of transition and desistance.

Not all extremists are violent – approaches need to be bespoke to the individual.

- Actions
  - Intervention planning needs to be personalised and targeted to the individual's needs.
  - Understanding why/how an individual engaged in deviant behaviour is important independent of any political ideology.

Planning for transition should begin well in advance of any release date.

- Actions
  - Planning is an active process that will be continuously revisited.
  - Planning changes with the individual and the context.
  - Planning should begin early in the custodial sentence.

Multi-agency planning is essential for individuals convicted of TPV as they plan to leave prison.

- Actions
  - Information sharing is important.
  - Ensuring continuity in support workers from prison to community is important.
  - Expectation management in planning is essential, goals should be unique to the individual, realistic, incremental, and flexible.

Interventionist skills and competencies

The expectations of criminal justice professionals, particularly prison officers, are often unrealistic.

- Actions
  - Communication with and feedback from probation colleagues regarding what can be achieved and what success looks like for all conviction categories.

The role of the prison officer is predominantly pro-social behaviour modelling.

- Actions
  - Provide criminal justice professionals with the knowledge necessary to model non-violent conflict resolution, establish trust in a corrections environment, and reinforce positive behaviour among those in their care.
  - Recognise that even small incremental change can be very positive.

Non-prison-officer staff should be involved in transition support in the prison.

- Actions
  - Identify the qualities needed in working with individuals incarcerated for TPV in the prison (mental health skills, conflict resolution skills, cultural knowledge, gang experience?).
  - Identify the staff most appropriate for each need.
  - Consider realistic goals for staff (e.g., behavioural modelling).

Training received is often rudimentary and based primarily on signs of radicalisation – this is insufficient and arguably empirically unsound.

- Actions
  - Taking a needs-based approach to individuals ensures that any frameworks on terrorism or extremism do not hide the nuance of the individual in question.

A need to recognise that the existing skills of criminal justice workers are applicable in the case of extremism and political violence.

- Actions
  - Reaffirm and reinforce the existing skills of criminal justice staff that are useful in dealing with TPV.
  - Take a needs-based (individualised) approach to those incarcerated.

- Consider the transferability of skills from one category of convictions to another (e.g., sex offending, inter-personal violence etc.) and how these skills will be useful for dealing with TPV convictions.

Continuity of care (care worker/lead worker) should be prioritised during the transition from prison.

- Actions
  - Ensure support worker(s) follow the individual through their transition journey.

Transition preparation should be a distinct role in the prison.

- Actions
  - Collaborate with outside agencies or support in-house staff to begin transition planning early on in an individual's sentence.

Different skills are needed at different phases of the transition (mentoring, education, preparation, social skills).

- Actions
  - Transition planning should be a multi-agency effort, led by one key worker.
  - Transition plans can and do change according to need and should be revisited regularly and be flexible.

Interventions can be delivered by statutory and NGO agencies, but it is important to ensure all agencies are suitably skilled and vetted.

- Actions
  - Elements of transition support can be delivered by non-statutory agencies e.g., mentoring, but overall responsibility should remain with a statutory key worker.

The issue of racism in prison (amongst guards and those incarcerated) needs to be addressed.

- Actions
  - Zero tolerance of racism and xenophobia amongst staff.
  - Initiatives to manage gang activities in prison should be undertaken.

Feedback on the impact of prison interventions is almost non-existent given that once an individual leaves prison, they move to another set of services.

- Actions
  - A means of sharing information back into the prison system would be useful to assist prison authorities in planning interventions. This information would also allow prison staff to understand the impact of their work on the individuals in question.

Structural and governance issues

Graduated release or a transition to a less structured more autonomous regime prior to release is recommended.

- Actions

- Consider step-down units.
- Consider day/employment release particularly for those with longer sentences.

Returning to disadvantaged areas with few opportunities is a barrier to successful transition.

- Actions
  - Plan educational options prior to release.
  - Consider realistic and meaningful employment options prior to release.
  - Provide sufficient social welfare support for return to education initiatives.
  - Have a graded system of reducing social welfare support during transition.

Consideration of the community into which the individual will return is an essential part of a successful transition.

- Actions
  - Community support is essential for a meaningful transition; local groups can offer help in this space.
  - Consider mentoring options and befriending options prior to release.

Rural services are limited and unlikely to be sufficient to support transition.

- Actions
  - Consider if a realistic support service will be available in a rural location.
  - Consider if the available family support is sufficient.
  - Consider if relocation is more realistic and supportive in the medium term.

Issues of immigration (on release) impede a successful transition e.g., administrative sanctions/restriction of movement.

- Actions
  - Multi-agency communication prior to release will allow planning for any additional immigration/security issues that emerge.
  - Transition planning should be multi-disciplinary and not solely dominated by security services.
  - There is a need to recognise local knowledge and local people and its/their role in planning and delivery.

Housing services are universally problematic.

- Actions
  - Take a 'housing first' approach. This means housing is provided according to need, and prior to any conditions being met.
  - Supported living should be available as an option, especially for individuals who served a long sentence, the elderly, women, and those with complex needs.

Education in prison is commonplace, the likelihood of securing meaningful employment is less so.

- Actions
    - Steps should be put in place to facilitate employment or further education/training on release:
        - applying for social services cards/documentation prior to release.
        - securing proof of address prior to release.
        - applying for educational courses prior to release.
        - making day release possible for employment/training etc.

Opportunities for employment are limited, particularly meaningful employment.

- Actions
    - Social support should be available during the transition period to guard against the impact of unemployment.
    - Opportunities for training and education should also be a viable alternative to employment.

Services should be available in a one-stop-shop facility.

- Actions
    - The mantra of *meet them where they are* applies to both the physical environment as well as the psycho-social condition of the client.

Pre-release preparation is essential.

- Actions
    - Administrative processes can be started early on in the transition process (drivers licence, school applications, social welfare applications, medical referrals etc.).

Barriers to voluntary work are a significant hurdle to eventual meaningful employment.

- Actions
    - Barriers in place due to conviction type need to be addressed pre-release (e.g., restrictions in law regarding the option for those with convictions to work in certain roles).

Gaps and outlook

Data-sharing

As with any complex social issue, there are gaps in our knowledge and gaps in our practice; the process of transitioning from prison is no different. A fundamental gap in our knowledge comes from issues with data collection, particularly the type of data available and the limitations on how this data can be shared. All participants in this study pointed out the lack of information and how it impacts their practice. In addition, the researchers involved in this study pointed out the problems they had in accessing data for analysis due to security issues or general issues with accessing appropriate criminal justice data.

Managing needs and expectations

Another issue that was evidenced by this study was the gap between the needs and expectations of practitioners and researchers. The day-to-day experience of managing pre- and post-transition was very much marked by limitations in the criminal justice systems and the social welfare systems. The expectations of the practitioners were tempered by what was thought to be achievable given these limitations. For researchers, the structural issues were also highly relevant, but there was also a focus on theoretical issues linked to the implementation of interventions. A specific gap in this space was how the structural limitations impacted the likely success of any interventions – understanding how poverty, housing options, employment and education opportunities interact with transition success for those convicted of TPV would be very useful in terms of intervention planning and transition success.

A needs-based approach: gender and P/CVE

Finally, an issue that was raised by the participants in this study was that of gender, primarily related to the delivery of bespoke services for men and women, but also around the specific needs of women incarcerated for TPV. There is significant research available regarding women in prison and women transitioning from prison, but very limited information on the specific case of TPV is available. Lessons from general criminological research might be useful in this domain.

Overall, in this study, the key findings are how the limitations of the criminal justice system, the prison regime, and the social welfare system impact the everyday experience of working with individuals incarcerated for TPV. In addition, there was a clear recognition that practitioners have the necessary transferable skills for working in this domain and these should be recognised and harnessed. Finally, in terms of success, the participants here point out the importance of a multiagency approach, the problems of governance issues, the existing social problems that are replicated in prisons and the issues with a community being willing to accept an individual back. All participants felt success was a long term venture. they believed success was possible, but there needed to be a nuanced understanding of what was possible and realistic.

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