

THE IMPORTANCE OF INDEPENDENT INSPECTION IN ENGLAND AND WALES

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The two sides of the main gate of the famous Wormwood Scrubs prison in London are depictions of two great British prison reformers – John Howard and Elizabeth Fry. Both were determined to improve conditions for prisoners in England and to those being transported to the British colonies.

It is in the work of these and other reformers that the idea of independent inspection of prisons began to grow. Initially, the responsibility of carrying out this task fell upon magistrates; however, as time progressed, official roles were created. Nevertheless, these roles were frequently perceived as closely aligned with the prison service they monitored, functioning more as an internal auditing body rather than an independent scrutineer.

In 1981, the government created the post of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons. As this appointment is made by the Crown, it is technically regarded as independent from the government. The chief inspector and their team were given the right to conduct unannounced visits to all prisons and to report on the treatment and conditions of prisoners. I am the 8th chief inspector to fill the role, and neither I, nor my predecessors, have worked in the prison service. Our diverse backgrounds include a diplomat, a judge, a soldier, two from human rights bodies, a police officer and me, a teacher.

With the development of an independent inspectorate, England and Wales fulfilled their obligations to Mandela Rule 83 – “(b) External inspections conducted by a body independent of the prison administration, which may include competent international or regional bodies”.¹ Although the inspectorate pre-dates the Mandela rules, our work aligns closely to these universal human rights standards.

I assumed the post in November 2020 during the pandemic, finding an organization that was well organized, well-respected, and fiercely determined to protect its independence.

The idea of prison – locking up criminals for a period decided by the court, is a relatively recent idea. Prior to the 18th century there was much greater reliance on the use of physical punishment or execution. But as the number of offences on the statute book grew, transportation began to be used as an alternative to the death penalty. Initially convicts were sent to the American colonies, but after the war of independence they were transported to Australia, and by the middle of the 19th century, more than 160,000 had made the journey.²

Over time, transportation itself began to be seen as inhumane, leading to new prisons being built, particularly in cities experiencing significant population growth and rising crime rates. As a result of this, numerous prisons were built which we still inspect to this day, over one hundred and fifty years later. Prisons such as Dartmoor, Wandsworth, Pentonville, Bristol and Birmingham continue to be used, despite their ageing and deteriorating conditions. These jails continue to be used because they are often located in city centres, close to courts and convenient for families to visit. They cannot be pulled down and replaced because they are listed buildings, protected because of their often-remarkable architecture. Over the years, however, these prisons have frequently experienced issues with overcrowding, violence, and high levels of

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¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules)*. Available at: The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (unodc.org) (Accessed: 22 January 2024).

² National Museum Australia (2022) *Convict transportation peaks*. Available at: Convict transportation peaks | National Museum of Australia (nma.gov.au) (Accessed: 22 January 2024).

drug use, and continue to be the biggest cause of concern for the inspectorate.

It is important to understand the influence of Christianity in the creation of our prison system. The notion that every human is uniquely created in the image of God, gave rise to the belief that prisoners, regardless of the heinousness of their crimes, could, if they had faith, be redeemed. However, for criminals to reform, it was imperative that they were isolated from the negative influence of their fellow inmates. So, they were locked in single cells, unable to talk to each other, except for sneaked conversations on exercise yards. The idea was that if they were left alone to work and pray, they would find their way back to God and would then become rehabilitated. The magnificent chapels inside so many of our prisons, with the most esteemed at Wormwood Scrubs, show the connection between imprisonment and religion.

The prison reformer, Samuel Hoare, described the objectives of prison as the enforcement of hard labour, strict silence and solitary confinement, which he believed to be the most effective means of morally rehabilitating offenders.³

Oscar Wilde, the great Irish playwright who was subjected to this regime in Reading gaol, where he served most of his two year's hard labour for homosexuality, wrote to the home secretary in 1896 following his release:

For more than thirteen dreadful months, the petitioner has been subject to the fearful system of solitary cellular confinement: without human intercourse of any kind; without writing materials whose use might help to distract the mind: without suitable or sufficient books, so essential to any literary man, so vital for the preservation of mental balance; condemned to absolute silence; cut off from all knowledge of the external world and the movements of life; leading an existence composed of bitter degradations and terrible hardships, hideous in its recurring monotony of dreary task and sickening privation.⁴

Already the tide was turning towards a more liberal approach with a greater focus on education and rehabilitation. For example, the borstal system introduced in 1902 and designed to reform younger offenders, was loosely based on English public schools with housemasters and lots of outdoor activity.⁵

Furthermore, in 1910, Winston Churchill, home secretary in the Asquith government, partly because of his imprisonment during the Boer War, set about making prison more humane, relaxing the rules on solitary confinement and introducing prison libraries. In a speech to the House of Commons in 2010 he said: "The mood and temper of the public in regard to the treatment of crime and criminals is one of the most unfailing tests of the civilisation of any country".⁶ He went on to say that a nation should have an "unflinching faith that there is a treasure, if you can only find it, in the heart of every man".⁷

After the second world war, the prison population had fallen to around 15,000, but by the time the role of chief inspector of prisons was created in 1981, there were 40,000 people in prison.⁸ In the first annual report from over 40 years ago, it described the three main challenges – overcrowding, prisoners spending too much time locked in their cells with nothing to do, and a prison estate that was in poor repair – and these have been common themes in our reports ever since. Interestingly in their foreword to the report, the then home secretary, William Whitelaw wrote: "Consistent with the need to maintain public confidence in the criminal justice system, at a time of rising crime, we are seeking a reduction in the prison population, by doing all we

³ Cooper, R. A. (1981) 'Jeremy Bentham, Elizabeth Fry, and English Prison Reform', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 42(4). Available at: Jeremy Bentham, Elizabeth Fry, and English Prison Reform on JSTOR (Accessed: 22 January 2024).

⁴ Lapham's Quarterly. *Oscar Wilde Pleads His Case: When has a mind been punished enough?* Available at: Oscar Wilde Pleads His Case | Lapham's Quarterly (laphamsquarterly.org) (Accessed: 22 January 2024).

⁵ Britannica. *Borstal system*. Available at: Borstal system | Juvenile Detention, Reforms & Education | Britannica (Accessed: 22 January 2024).

⁶ Stand Together Trust (2016) "*The Prisoners Friend*": *Winston Churchill's Beliefs on Criminal Justice Reform*. Available at: "Prisoners Friend": Winston Churchill & Criminal Justice Reform (standtogethertrust.org) (Accessed: 22 January 2024).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Sturge, G. (2023). 'UK Prison Population Statistics', *House of Commons Library*. Available at: SN04334.pdf (parliament.uk) (Accessed: 22 January 2024).

can to encourage the recent trend towards shorter sentences".⁹ This was a very different tone to that which we heard from politicians in the next decade.

The prison population growth during the latter half of the 20th century followed the dramatic rise in crime rate that began in the early 1960s and peaked in the mid-1990s.^{10, 11} Since then, it has begun to fall - according to the national crime survey - and few people would know that levels of serious violent crime were higher in 1981 than they are now.¹² Falls in crime since the mid-1990s were not limited to the UK — in the USA and in every country in Western Europe there were similar reductions, despite the often very different justice policies being enacted.^{13, 14}

There are many theories for why there has been a reduction in crime - in England and Wales the prison population nearly doubled from 45k to 85k between the early 1990s and the 2010s.¹⁵ In 1993, the home secretary, Michael Howard, made his famous "prison works" speech, in which he linked the falls in crime with increased incarceration.¹⁶ At the same time Tony Blair, the opposition's home secretary, expressed his commitment to being "tough on crime, and tough on the causes of crime".¹⁷

By March 2027, the prison population in England and Wales is projected to increase to a range of 93,100 to 106,300.¹⁸ Over time there has also been a remarkable increase in sentence lengths, with the average rising to 20.4 months in 2023 from 11.4 months in 2000.¹⁹ It is not uncommon during inspection to encounter young men who are looking at spending the next thirty years behind bars.

For many years policymakers have argued over the purpose of prison. Typically, it has been a combination of four factors: to deter, to punish, to rehabilitate and to protect the public, although the emphasis on each varies over time. These distinct purposes often clash with one another. There is a small, esoteric group that believes in the complete abolition of prison - though what if anything should replace it, is not entirely clear; it always comes up against the question, what would you do with people like Hannibal Lector? Even the most passionate prison abolitionists would not necessarily want him as a next-door neighbour.

The existence of prisons, like the courts and the police, are a protection against people taking the law into their own hands and applying summary justice to those who they think have wronged them. These institutions provide a degree of separation between victim and criminal and protect us from the consequences of our instinct for revenge. Few people would argue against prison for serious violent and sexual offences, but in a country that incarcerates at a higher rate than any other country in Western Europe, there is certainly a question about who should be going to prison and for how long.²⁰

⁹ Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons (1981) *Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales 1981*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

¹⁰ Office for National Statistics (2023) *Crime in England and Wales: year ending June 2023*. Available at: Crime in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk) (Accessed: 22 January 2024).

¹¹ UK Parliament. *Crimes of the century*. Available: Crimes of the century - UK Parliament (Accessed: 22 January 2024).

¹² Office for National Statistics (2023) *Crime in England and Wales: year ending June 2023*. Available at: Crime in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk) (Accessed: 22 January 2024).

¹³ Tonry, M. (2014) 'Why Crime Rates are Falling throughout the Western World', *Crime and Justice*, 43(1). Available at: Why Crime Rates Are Falling throughout the Western World (researchgate.net) (Accessed: 22 January 2024).

¹⁴ Federal Bureau of Investigation. *Crime Data Explorer*. Available at: CDE (cjis.gov) (Accessed: 22 January 2024).

¹⁵ Sturge, G. (2023). 'UK Prison Population Statistics', *House of Commons Library*. Available at: SN04334.pdf (parliament.uk) (Accessed: 22 January 2024).

¹⁶ Howard, M. (1993) *Does Prison Work?* Available at: https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjw96f8wvODAxVQiv0HHbBGCRgQFnoECBQQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.michaelhoward.org%2FPrison_Works.doc&usg=AOvVaw11GOazpNjKr-LGIn_CNAn&opi=89978449 (Accessed 22 January 2024).

¹⁷ British Political Speech. *Leader's speech, Blackpool 1994: Tony Blair (Labour)*. Available at: British Political Speech | Speech Archive (Accessed 22 January 2024).

¹⁸ Ministry of Justice (2023) *Prison Population Projections 2022 to 2027, England and Wales*. Available at: Prison_Population_Projections_2022_to_2027.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk) (Accessed 22 January 2024).

¹⁹ Clark, D. (2024) *Average custodial sentence length at all courts to immediate custody for all offences in England and Wales from 2000 to 2022*. Available at: Average prison sentence length in England and Wales 2022 | Statista (Accessed 22 January 2024).

²⁰ Fleck, A. (2023) *Incarceration: The Western European Nations Imprisoning the Most People*. Available at: Chart: The

Of the nearly 88,000 prisoners in the country, around 400 are children and 3,500 are women.²¹ They are spread around an estate which still includes the crumbling Victorian houses of correction, such as Bristol and Winchester, but also the brand-new prisons, such as Five Wells in Northamptonshire. The prison estate is split into different categories that reflect both the nature of the prisoners they hold and the aims of the establishment, from high security jails, such as Wakefield, to open prisons, such as Ford in Sussex.

Of the 120 prisons in England and Wales, 15 are contracted to private providers who can make a profit out of delivering the service.²² These prisons are usually built with a newer infrastructure and are generally in better condition than older parts of the estate. There have been some serious failings by privately run contractors, notably at Birmingham jail which was returned to the public sector after it got into a catastrophic state. However, some of the better prisons in England and Wales are currently those run by private contractors.

In March 2020, the prison service quickly responded to alarming projections about the impact of Covid-19. They promptly implemented testing measures, new prisoners were quarantined, visits were stopped and transfers between prisons were limited.

Our inspections during that time found that apart from those who were doing prison jobs like cleaning, waste management and kitchen work, most prisoners were locked in their cells for around 22.5 hours a day – more in some cases and especially at weekends. In a Victorian jail, such as Bedford or Leicester, that meant that two prisoners were typically spending most of their time in a 12 foot by six-foot cell with a bunk bed, a sink, an unscreened lavatory in the corner, a kettle, a chair, and a television set. Any pretence at rehabilitation was sacrificed to keep staff and prisoners safe from the virus.

We continue to be disappointed by the pace at which prisons have reopened services since the pandemic. Inspections of category C training prisons show there has been a depressingly low level of activity for prisoners in jails whose responsibility is to educate, train and increase the employability of prisoners, with the aim of preparing them for their eventual release.

A sort of post-Covid torpor seems to have infected many prisons, with workshops and classrooms remaining empty, and prisoners wiling away their time watching daytime television and sleeping. This is in part because some prisons simply do not have enough staff to run them properly. The UK government's austerity measures, introduced in 2010, led to a reduced head count of prison officers and a cut in budgets.²³ The result was between March 2015 and 2019 the percentage of prison officers with more than three years' service fell from 92% to 58%.²⁴

The loss of experienced staff, who knew how to keep wings running smoothly, combined with the arrival of synthetic psychoactive substances, such as Mamba and Spice, was catastrophic for the prison system. By the time these drugs had been criminalized, networks for getting them into prisons had been established, meaning that letters, photographs and even clothing could be laced with illegal substances and then smoked or sold to other prisoners.²⁵ Fewer staff and more drugs meant that prisoners built up debt they could not pay, and rival gangs began to compete for the lucrative prison market. From 2014 to 2019, the rate of

Western European Nations Imprisoning the Most People | Statista (Accessed: 22 January 2024).

²¹ Ministry of Justice (2024) *Prison population figures: 2024: Latest prison population figures for 2024*. Available at: Prison population figures: 2024 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) (Accessed 22 January 2024); Youth Custody Service (2024) *Youth custody data*. Available at: Youth custody data - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) (Accessed: 22 January 2024).

²² Beard, J. (2023) 'The Prison Estate in England and Wales', *House of Commons Library*. Available at: SN05646.pdf (parliament.uk) (Accessed: 22 January 2024).

²³ Ismail, N. (2022) 'After a decade of austerity, urgent changes are needed to improve prison services', *University of Bristol*. Available at: PolicyBristol_PolicyReport79_Prison-funding-austerity_Ismail.pdf (Accessed: 22 January 2024).

²⁴ Ministry of Justice (2020) *Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service workforce quarterly: December 2019*. Available at: Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service workforce quarterly: December 2019 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) (Accessed: 22 January 2024).

²⁵ HM Prison & Probation Service (2019) *Prisons Drug Strategy*. Available at: Prison Drugs Strategy (publishing.service.gov.uk) (Accessed 22 January 2024).

violence doubled, as the prison service tried in vain to stem the assaults both on staff and between prisoners.²⁶ The anxiety caused by drugs, violence and debt could well have contributed to the rise in rates of self-harm.

There is no doubt that lockdowns reduced the levels of violence at most jails — with only small numbers of prisoners unlocked at any one time, there were fewer opportunities for violence. Furthermore, the introduction of better technology, such as body scanners, means it has now become harder to get drugs into prisons.

There are certainly those who would like to maintain this restrictive regime – there is an old prison officer saying that “happiness is door shaped”, meaning prisoners who are locked up cannot do any harm. We cannot yet know what the long-term effects of extended lockdowns will be on this generation of prisoners, but it is likely there will be a price to pay for the boredom, the inactivity, the loss of family ties, the postponement of group therapy and the lack of education or work.

Reoffending rates for those leaving custody remain stubbornly high at 38% for adults and 63% for children.²⁷ This suggests that most prisons are doing a better job of punishing than they are at rehabilitating or protecting the public from future crime. If prisons are to be an essential component of a successful justice system, that is trusted by the public to keep them safe, then our model needs to change.

There are some who are sceptical regarding the rehabilitation of prisoners, believing that the sole deterrent against recidivism is getting older and the responsibilities of having a family. It is certainly true that most crime is committed by young men, and for many, growing up, taking responsibility for children, and finding work are all powerful resilience factors; however, the idea that prisons can achieve nothing beyond warehousing offenders until they grow out of crime is as depressing as it is wrong.

Every week I meet prisoners who are desperate to escape the cycle of crime and incarceration. Many are addicted to drugs or alcohol, and they describe how their lives, and those of the people around them, have often been destroyed by their habit, and they want help to change. Other prisoners have never known anything but the chaotic life in which they have been immersed since childhood – they never succeeded at school and have none of the skills or habits that they will need if they want to hold down a job or stay in a relationship when they are released.

Prisons like Grendon in Oxfordshire have demonstrated that it is possible to provide intense, therapeutic support for prisoners, some of whom have been fighting the system inside and outside custody all their lives. Similarly, Buckley Hall near Manchester or Warren Hill in Suffolk have shown how to create a rehabilitative culture. Oakwood, the largest prison in the country, thrives because of the way its leaders have given trust to prisoners. One man, who was serving a very long sentence at Oakwood, told me he had found meaning in his life for the first time in years through running a wood workshop for some of the prison's most vulnerable fellow prisoners.

The idea of rehabilitation describes a process that takes place over time. Criminals do not usually stop offending overnight, but often gradually reduce their criminal output. A change in identity away from the anti-social to the pro-social is important. Offenders must be able to view themselves from a new perspective — as someone who has moved away from crime and can achieve success. This psychological change is supported by practical support – when they leave prison, ex-offenders need to have somewhere safe to live, something meaningful to do and they need to be kept both physically and mentally healthy.

This means that rehabilitation works best when there are close links between prisons and the community, and that when it is safe to do so, there must be an expectation that prisoners will be released on temporary licence as they reach the end of their sentence. This helps to reintegrate them back into society, reunites

²⁶ Ministry of Justice (2020) *Safety in Custody Statistics, England and Wales: Deaths in Prison Custody to March 2020 Assaults and Self-harm to December 2019*. Available at: Safety in Custody Statistics Bulletin, England and Wales, Deaths in prison custody to December 2016, Assaults and Self-Harm to September 2016 (publishing.service.gov.uk) (Accessed 22 January 2024).

²⁷ Ministry of Justice (2023) *Proven reoffending statistics: October to December 2021*. Available at: Proven reoffending statistics: October to December 2021 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) (Accessed 22 January 2024).

them with their families, and instils in them the habit of waking up and going to work.

There must also be continuity of health care, so that when they are released, their cases can be picked up by health services outside the jail. Too often, those leaving custody suffer a deterioration in their mental health that can lead to self-medication through substance abuse, engaging in criminal activities, and ultimately ending up back in prison.

Leadership is crucial to improving our jails. We find that the best governors can make a difference even in the hardest-to-run prisons, maintaining basic standards of care for prisoners and making sure that the jail is kept safe for those who live and work there. Running a jail can take a huge personal toll on a governor — I found it challenging running a school for children with behaviour difficulties, but I never had to worry about getting a phone call on Christmas day telling me that there had been a riot, or that a prisoner had escaped. This means that the best governors can get burnt out and exhausted, meaning they do not stay long enough in post to change some of the deep cultural issues that are embedded into the very fabric of the jail. It takes a good three years to begin to change a prison culture, and five to really move things on. In many prisons the turnover of governors is so high that officers cannot be blamed for sticking with what they know, rather than adapting to a lot of change imposed by a governor who might not even be there in six months.

Most of our inspections are unannounced. We have a confidential inspection schedule that ensures every jail is inspected at least every five years. More risky prisons are likely to get more regular visits, every two to three years.

Once a prison has been selected, we will drive to the prison car park on a Monday morning and put a call through to the governor, announcing the inspection and asking for arrangements to be made for us to have keys and a base room from which we can work. Our research team then go into the prison and run our prisoner survey. We randomly select prisoners based on the number of prisoners there that day. This gives us a representative proportion of the detainee population. The survey asks a wide range of questions about their experiences and perceptions of the jail, from the way they are treated when they arrive in custody, the behaviour of staff, the availability of drugs, the quality of education and the support for eventual release. The survey currently stretches to more than 100 questions, but much to my surprise when I first watched the team in action, most prisoners are keen to fill out the form. Where prisoners struggle with reading or are not English speaking, our team will assist to make sure we hear as wide a range of voices as possible. Prisoners welcome the chance to express their views about the jail and, as well as the questionnaire, they can also add their own comments.

While the survey is ongoing, one of our team who is coordinating the inspection will spend a day walking round the jail, making some initial assessments about general standards and talking to staff and prisoners. The surveys are then collected, and the information is analysed, allowing us to compare the prison to its last inspection as well as with other similar prisons. We also have access to the prison service's centralized data systems that allow us to consider trends across a wide range of metrics such as violence, self-harm, drug testing, serious incidents, and prisoner complaints. We also expect the governor to send us their own self-assessment of the state of the jail. All this information is gathered in the first week of the inspection and means that when inspectors arrive on the Monday morning of the second week, the team are already well prepared and have some good leads and information about the jail.

Our teams have a leader and then three or four inspectors. Each team is accompanied by our specialist health care inspectors, colleagues from the CQC and colleagues from Ofsted who look at education and training.

Our inspections use a set of expectations that we devised that follow the four tests by which we judge prisons. Expectations are the documents which set out the criteria we use to inspect prisons and other forms of detention. They are based on international human rights standards, including the Nelson Mandela rules, and are used to examine all aspects of life in detention. There is a different version of expectations for each type of custody we inspect. Our basic inspection methodology is consistent across all forms of detention. It consists of a series of broad thematic judgments known as healthy establishment tests.

The tests vary slightly but all have been developed from our four tests of a healthy prison, which are:

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1. Safety: Prisoners, particularly the most vulnerable, are held safely.
2. Respect: Prisoners are treated with respect for their human dignity.
3. Purposeful activity: Prisoners are able, and expected, to engage in activity that is likely to benefit them.
4. Preparation for release: Preparation for release is understood as a core function of the prison. Prisoners are supported to maintain and develop relationships with their family and friends. Prisoners are helped to reduce their likelihood of reoffending and their risk of harm is managed effectively. Prisoners are prepared for their release back into the community.

After four days of inspecting, the team convenes with the chief inspector, and we decide the scores for each area of a healthy prison:

- 1 = Poor
- 2 = Not sufficiently good
- 3 = Reasonably good
- 4 = Good.

We also assess the quality of leadership; however, this is not scored. That evening the team leader and chief inspector feedback the results to the governor of the prison. In the past, we would make up to 200 recommendations of areas to improve. However, I believed that this was an excessive number for the prison to effectively address. As a result, we now focus on Priority Concerns and Key Concerns that we consider to be the most crucial aspects requiring improvement. Subsequently, it is the responsibility of the governor and their team to devise an action plan.

All prison inspection reports should be finalized and published within 14 weeks of the end of the inspection.

If the chief inspector is particularly worried about a prison, they can invoke a “Urgent Notification” (UN) to the secretary of state for justice – meaning there are problems that need to be addressed immediately. The secretary of state then has 28 days to prepare an action plan in response to the UN. Sadly, I have used this power an unprecedented five times within a year between November 2022 and November 2023.

Where we have some concerns about a prison, we will return within 12 months to assess how much progress has been made. If we deem the progress insufficient, it is possible that we will declare another inspection, providing the prison with a notice period of six months to address the issues at hand.

An important part of the chief inspector’s job is engaging with various media platforms – television, radio, newspapers and online — to raise our concerns about prisons. I also go before parliamentary committees to give evidence in their investigations into standards in jails.

The inspectorate retains a strong reputation for fairness and integrity, built up by my predecessors in the role and by the outstanding team that I lead. Our reports are taken seriously by prison governors, the prison service, ministers, parliament, and the public. Having said this, we remain frustrated by the time it takes to make improvements, particularly in Purposeful Activity, where we see, since the pandemic, prisoners continuing to be locked in their cells with not enough to do and not gaining the skills that they need to succeed when they come out.

Independent inspection is critical to the UK fulfilling its commitments to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT). There is much good work going on in our prisons, and some are as good as any in the world, but there are also some serious problems that need to be addressed. The independent inspectorate makes sure that ministers, the prison service, parliament, the media, and the public are kept informed about the state of our prisons and challenges that must be addressed to make improvements. Only by letting light and oxygen into a system that is necessarily closed to the outside world, can we make sure that those who are incarcerated are kept in decent conditions and the public is protected from future

offences and the misery caused by crime.