



University of
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CARE SEMINAR SERIES 2016-17

Unlocking the Knowledge and Experience of Autism in the Prison

Dr Clare Allely and Dr Toni Wood, University of Salford

Date: 1st December 2016

Time: 2:30 p.m.

Room: Mary Seacole, MS256

Refreshments Provided

Synopsis

Her Majesty's Young Offenders Institute (HMYOI) Feltham has become the first prison or young offender institution in the country to be awarded Autism Accreditation. Her Majesty's Young Offenders Institute (HMYOI) Feltham has been working with The National Autistic Society (NAS) for nearly two years to improve the way they support offenders with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) who are in custody. The Accreditation aims to improve autism practice across all areas of prison life, including: admission, prison staff training, behaviour management and the physical environment, with the long term aim of tackling issues often faced by prisoners with ASD and ultimately reducing the risk of recidivism in this group. However, despite prison interest and some prisons being involved with pilot work within the UK, Feltham remains the only prison in the UK to have Autism Accreditation. Given that there are a number of studies suggesting that the prevalence of ASD is higher in the prison population when compared to the general population (e.g., Scragg & Shah, 1994), it highlights the urgent need for more prisons to gain Autism Accreditation and for further research to gain more of an understanding the specific needs of inmates with ASD and prison staffs knowledge of the disorder.



Recognising the importance of research in this field, lecturers at the University of Salford, Dr Clare Allely and Dr Toni Wood, have combined their expertise in a unique project which will involve questionnaires and semi-interviews of a broad section of prison staff as well as inmates with ASD with the aim of increasing our understanding of what areas could be improved on and, crucially, to assist in the development of a toolkit for prison staff in order to try and increase the identification, recognition and understanding of ASD within the prison

environment. Our project addresses a real gap in the research. To date, the research looking at these issues is sparse.

The importance of projects such as the one by Dr Toni Wood and Dr Clare Allely cannot be stressed enough when you read the literature which suggests that individuals with ASD are more vulnerable to bullying and social isolation within the prison environment (Allely, 2015a). In a review of the literature published last year, Allely (2015b) identified only four studies which investigated the experience of individuals with ASD in the prison. All highlighted that inmates with ASDs can experience numerous difficulties within the prison environment such as poor relationships with prison staff and other inmates.

Speakers

Dr Clare Allely

Clare is a Lecturer in Psychology at the University of Salford in Manchester, England. She is also an Honorary Research Fellow position in the College of Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences affiliated to the Institute of Health and Wellbeing at the University of Glasgow.

Clare holds a PhD in psychology from the University of Manchester and has previously graduated with an MA (hons.) in Psychology from the University of Glasgow, an MRes in Psychological Research Methods from the University of Strathclyde and an MSc degree in Forensic Psychology from Glasgow Caledonian University. Between June 2011 and June 2014, Clare worked at the University of Glasgow as a postdoctoral researcher.

Dr Allely is an affiliate member of the Gillberg Neuropsychiatry Centre (GNC) at Gothenburg University in Sweden. She is currently collaborating with colleagues at the GNC on a number of papers and projects including one looking at cholesterol metabolism and steroid abnormalities of various kinds (cortisol, testosterone, estrogen, vitamin D) in autism spectrum disorder (ASD). She is also working on projects with colleagues in the UK looking at ASD in the criminal justice system.

Dr Toni Wood

Toni is a Lecturer in Criminology at the University of Salford. She holds a PhD in criminology from the University of Salford and has previously graduated with an MRes in Criminology and Socio Legal Studies from the University of Manchester. Prior to this, Toni worked in NHS mental health secure settings. Her main research interests are centred around health and wellbeing in prisons and the prisoner community. Toni is also working on a long term project exploring pathways out of football academies for young people, and looking at the aftercare and impact on young footballers once they are released from the academies.

Recent related publication with Dr Clare Allely in The Psychologist: (<https://thepsychologist.bps.org.uk/volume-29/november-2016/adults-autism-criminal-justice-system>)

In order to arrange refreshments, please register your attendance here:

[Eventbrite – Unlocking the Knowledge and Experience of Autism in Prison](#)

References

Allely, C. S. (2015a). Autism spectrum disorders in the criminal justice system: police interviewing, the courtroom and the prison environment. *Recent Advances in Autism*, 1-13.

Allely, C. S. (2015b). Experiences of prison inmates with autism spectrum disorders and the knowledge and understanding of the spectrum amongst prison staff: a review. *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities and Offending Behaviour*, 6(2), 55-67.

Lewis, A., Pritchett, R., Hughes, C., & Turner, K. (2015). Development and implementation of autism standards for prisons. *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities and Offending Behaviour*, 6(2), 68-80.

McAdam, P. (2009). Knowledge and understanding of the autism spectrum amongst prison staff. *Good Autism Practice (GAP)*, 10(1), 19-25.

Scragg, P., & Shah, A. (1994). Prevalence of Asperger's syndrome in a secure hospital. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 165(5), 679-682.

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