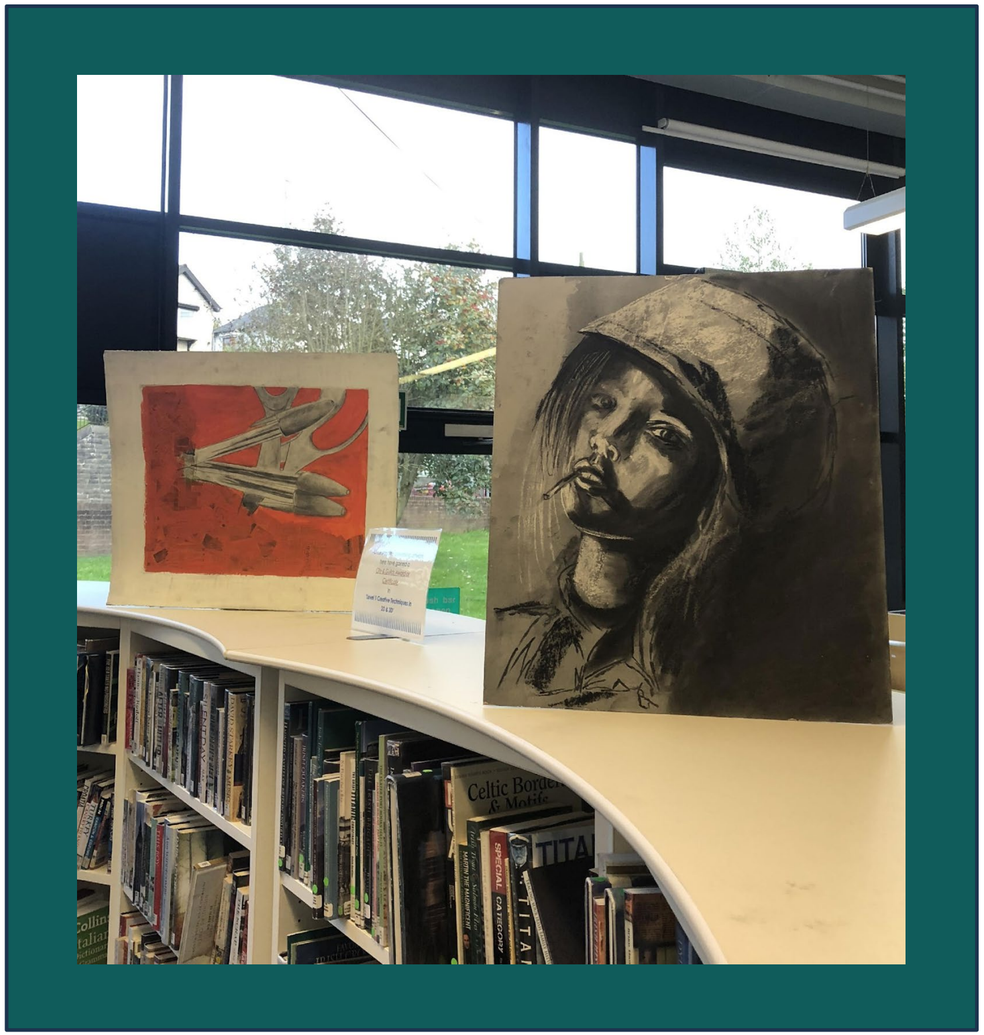
CILIP Prison Libraries Training Day

‘Working Together’

27th November 2024



A snapshot of prison library provision across England and Wales: Staff survey findings

Jayne Finlay and Giulia Romana Neri
The University of Sheffield

Background to survey

- What did we want to find out?
- How did we do this?
- Who did we hear from?

Snapshot of findings (presentation/discussion)

- Library access and outreach
- Collaboration with public libraries
- What's going well in prison libraries? What isn't going well?
- Promoting library services
- How prison libraries are perceived / valued by others
- Opportunities for professional development and engagement

Why did we do this?

To get an up-to-date overview of how prison libraries are managed and delivered across England and Wales

To understand some of the key issues around library access and provision

To identify professional development and engagement needs and opportunities for prison library staff

What did we ask?

Section 1: Management and staffing

Section 2: Library access

Section 3: Range of library services and resources

Section 4: Library systems and IT

Section 5: Professional Development, Training and Engagement Opportunities

How did we do this?

Development

Input from CILIP Prison Libraries Group and HMPPS

Pilot phase with prison library staff

Included both closed and open ended questions

Distribution

- JISC Prison Libraries Mailing List
- CILIP, Libraries Connected
- Existing contacts

Open for responses between mid July – late August 2024

Analysis

Currently analysing data and writing report based on our findings.

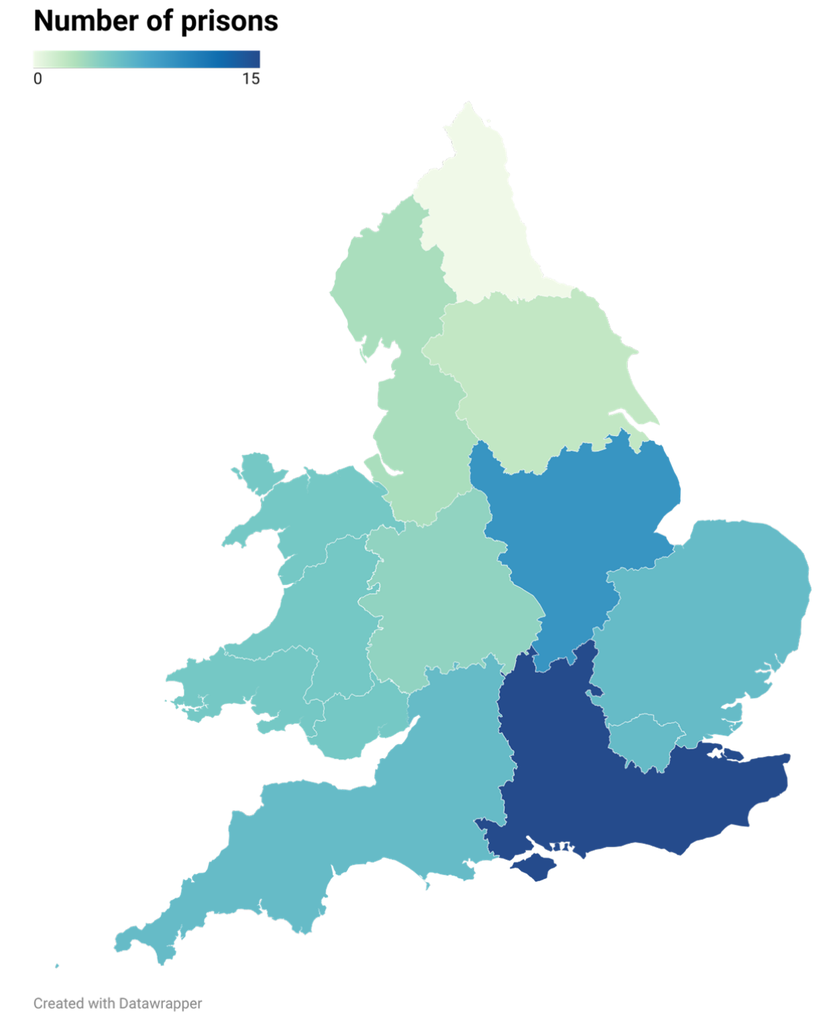
Who did we hear from?

57 prisons overall

52 in England, 5 in Wales

5 private prisons

3 women's prisons
1 YOI
1 Cat A
1 Cat A/B
16 Cat B
4 Cat B/C
23 Cat C
4 Cat D



Model of library provision

- **39** libraries run under SLA with local Public Library Authority
- **9** libraries run by a Prison Education provider
- **8** libraries run by a VCSE (including GLL)
- **1** in-house library service

Snapshot of findings

Access and outreach

54%

of staff felt that prisoners had sufficient access to library services at their site

95%

of libraries provided outreach services to prisoners

Library outreach includes:

Services to those in segregation and ICU, those who are working and cannot attend library sessions, those with accessibility needs

Request and delivery service:

- Both physical and digital
- Deliveries made by library staff or orderlies
- Increased use since Covid

Satellite libraries on different wings

Barriers to access and outreach include:

- Officer shortages
- Apathy of prison staff
- Timetable clashes
- No mixing of prisoners
- Orderlies not having bands to visit areas of prison
- Applications getting ignored / not reaching library staff

“I feel quality of the provision is only measured by footfall, not what the customer wants or by the service they receive…There is no understanding that not everyone wants to access the library weekly but it is important that everyone has the chance. There is no understanding that a really short visit to the library without adequate time to browse or do research can be as frustrating as not being able to visit the library at all.”

(High security men’s prison)

Collaboration with public libraries

75%

of libraries collaborate with public libraries to provide services

Of the 14 libraries who *do not* collaborate with public libraries to provide services:

8 are run by prison education providers
4 are run by VCSEs
1 is run in-house
1 runs under a Service Level Agreement with the local PLA
2 are private prisons

Collaboration with public libraries

- Interlibrary loans
- Withdrawn books and DVDs, donations
- Providing books for reading groups
- Staff cover
- Training
- Sharing ideas and information
- Funding author events
- Exhibitions
- Provision of library cards on release
- School mobile library attends family day

What's going well in prison libraries?

Access

Reading initiatives

Library events

Stock

Rapport with prisoners

Prisoner benefits

Library space

Collaboration

Promotion of library

Perception of library

Share with your table:

Something that is going well in your library / organisation

and/or

Any positive feedback you have received from library users or other prison staff

What isn’t going well?

Access

Stock

Library space

Perception of library

Communication

IT equipment

Staffing

Question:

Which of these resonate with your experience?

Are there examples where you have overcome some of these challenges in your library/workplace?

How are library services promoted?

70%

of prisons included library visits during a prisoner's induction

Posters / leaflets / flyers throughout the prison
Membership packs
Through staff in the education department
First night books in induction wings
In-cell technology or kiosks
TV adverts
Word of mouth, especially via orderlies and wing reps
Library staff visiting wings to talk to people
Inclusion in prison newspaper / magazine
Newsletters
Podcast

Promotion also happens through collaboration:

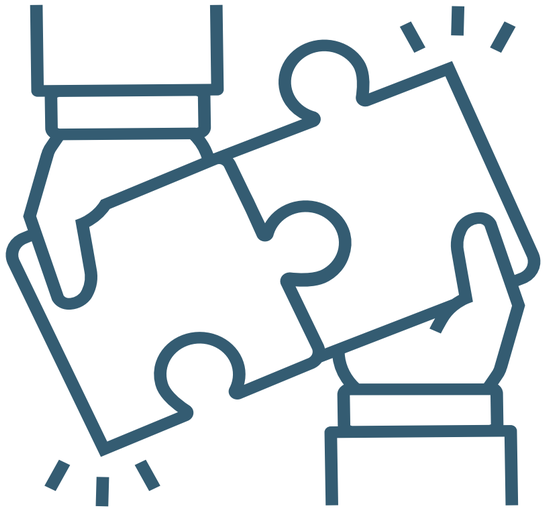
Collaborating with other departments to promote library services and events

Running prisoner / staff reading groups

Enlisting the help of officers: *“we encourage staff to register as borrowers to promote our books”*

PID workers promoting the library

The library taking part in other events e.g. family days



How is the library viewed within the prison?

95%

of staff felt that prisoners valued the library

“The prisoners provide feedback to us that they value the library service, and that it has helped to improve their mental health, a place where they can research and a break from thinking about their sentence.”

“Some prisoners express their gratitude for library services and this is appreciated.”

How is the library viewed within the prison?

67%

of staff felt that the library was valued by the Senior Management Team

Open comments revealed that they have become more interested in the library since the reading strategy was introduced:

“Following the introduction of the reading strategy the library has more recognition for its role in supporting the wider prison aims”

“The Reading Strategy is forcing the Senior Management to take an interest in the Library, but it feels like box ticking.”

How is the library viewed within the prison?

32%

of staff felt that the library was valued by prison officers

“I feel that some officers do not value the library and think it is a luxury the prisoners don't deserve. There are some prison officers who don't think like this, but the few that do can limit my ability to reach people.”

“There is a lack of care from most officers who are unaware of our existence. They fail to understand the importance of returning books handed in, delivery of books to prisoners and clearance of cells before leavers depart (mostly they take library books with their property).”

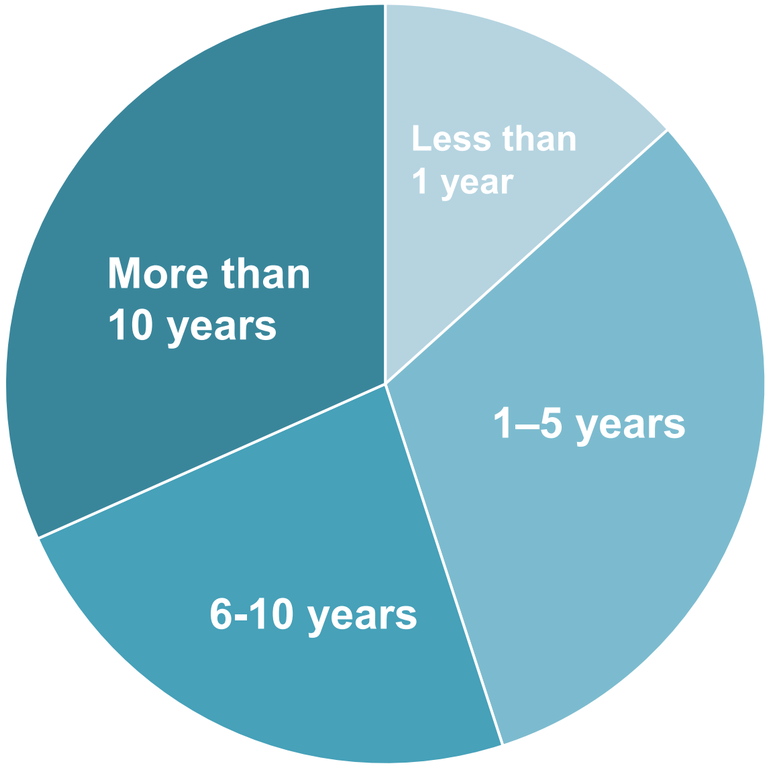
How is the library valued by other staff within *your* prison?

Have you seen a change since Reading Strategy has been introduced?

How do you think officers' awareness of library services could be improved?

Professional development and engagement

How long have you worked in prison libraries?



82%

of staff felt that, in general, they had received sufficient training for their role

48%

of staff said they have opportunities for professional development

Examples included:

- Training provided by local authority libraries or GLL
- CILIP events, including Prison Libraries Training Day
- In-house training
- Events run by Libraries Connected, Reading Agency and Prison Reading Group

“I am saying yes, however training is very rare and far between”

82%

of staff said they would like *more* opportunities for professional engagement

- Stock management
- Legal research
- Planning & funding events
- Neurodiversity training
- Site visits to other prisons
- Opportunities to share experiences / exchange ideas

What training / CPD opportunities do you have in your role?

What would *you* most benefit from in terms of professional development and engagement?

Questions?

Contact: jayne.finlay@sheffield.ac.uk

National Literacy Trust

Change your story

Literacy and creativity:
making space for reading and writing outside the classroom

Rebecca Perry, Head of Criminal Justice & Adult Literacy
National Literacy Trust

National Literacy Trust

We empower people with the literacy skills they need to succeed in life. Together we're helping people change their stories.

Where and how we work

Teachers and schools

Professional development

School & AP projects

Libraries for Primaries

Policy, campaigning and research

Campaigning

Annual Literacy Survey

Convene APPG

Communities and local areas

Tailored local approaches

10-year commitment

Work in prisons

Parents and families

Words for Life

Early years settings

Our work in prisons

Our approach

- Literacy as enrichment – a tool for engagement and self-expression
- Where prison education tends to focus on Functional Skills and employability, we aim to build confidence and wellbeing
- We tailor our projects to ensure that they feel distinct from formal education
- Trauma-informed and participant-led

What we do

Books Unlocked

- Donates Booker Prize titles to prison libraries, reading groups and individuals in custody
- Arranges author visits
- Broadcasts audiobooks on National Prison Radio

New Chapters

- Promotes creative writing
- Centres authors with relevant lived experience
- Publishes an annual anthology of writing
- National two-year project funded by the Youth Endowment Fund to build an evidence-base of what arts interventions work for young people in custody

Readconnect

- Supports parents and carers in prison to connect with their children through literacy activities
- Runs workshops to build confidence
- Provides resource packs to promote connection
- Supports prison family days

Inside Stories with Audible

- Supports under 18s in custody to develop storytelling and communication skills
- Participants create original audio content
- Young people have access to pre-downloaded audiobooks via Amazon Kindle Fire tablets

Literacy Innovation Fund

- Funded by the Ministry of Justice – two years in six designated prisons
- Pilot project to see what impact literacy can have outside of formal education
- Full NLT offer tailored to each specific cohort
- Monthly workshops and on-wing activity

Workshop examples

- Writing a storybook for your child
- Read and paint
- Joke telling for children
- Writing monologues for the stage
- English for beginners
- Spoken word
- Group lyric writing
- Supporting recovery through writing

Our reach

Our reach

- We reach approximately **100** prisons through book donations and audiobooks
- **80,000** people have the ability to listen to the audiobooks we broadcast via National Prison Radio
- We deliver hands-on workshops and group sessions in **13** prisons
- In 2023/24 we donated around **5,500** books to prison libraries, reading groups and individuals

Our impact

Our impact

- **88%** of New Chapters participants said that engaging with the project made them feel more confident about expressing themselves in writing
- **89%** of LIF participants said the session inspired them to write more and **93%** said the session inspired them to engage with other education opportunities in their setting
- **100%** of Readconnect participants said that sessions inspired them to support their child(ren)’s learning, and **95%** said that they are now more confident in supporting their child(ren) through storytelling and reading

Equality, diversity & inclusion

- Everyone is welcome to our sessions, no matter their literacy level, incentive level, index crime etc.
- We promote our events in a way that ensures equity of access
- The texts and authors we use cover a broad and representative range of backgrounds and experiences

National Literacy Trust

Change your story

Working in partnership

Working in partnership

1

Prison librarians

2

Education providers

3

Prison staff

(Heads of ESW, neurodiversity leads)

4

Family services providers

5

Our participants

6

Authors/ experts

7

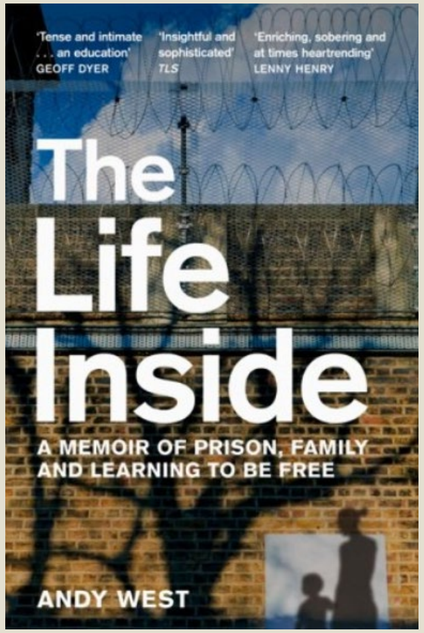
Other charities

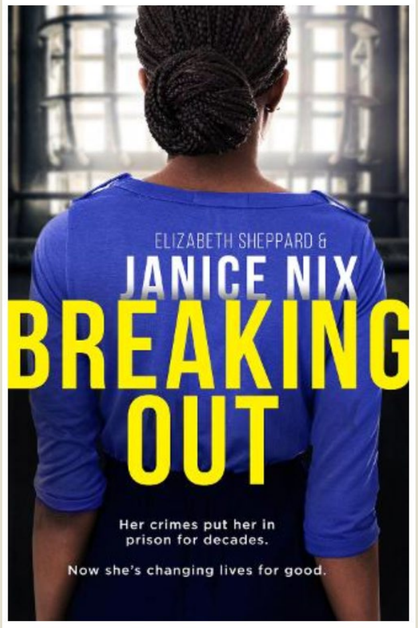
8

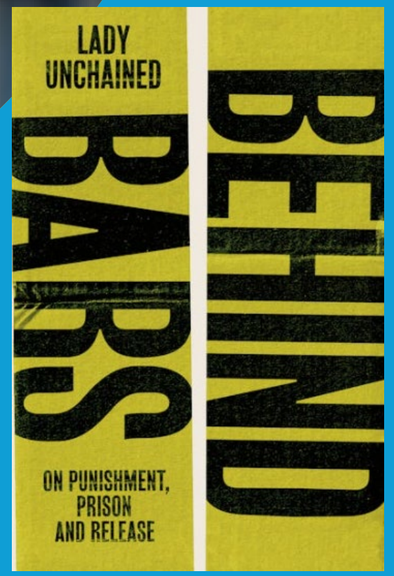
Our funders

Lived experience

Authors and practitioners with lived experience of the justice system are central to our work







Participant voice

Young people in HMYOI Aylesbury

We consulted with young people in HMYOI Aylesbury after three years of New Chapters delivery. Based on their feedback we redesigned the project to focus on creative writing and centre authors with lived experience of prison.

Men in HMP Swaleside

As part of our Readconnect project, sessions were designed based on what the men felt were the areas they needed to build skills in. They wanted to be more confident about reading over the phone, as well as having conversations with their children about philosophy and climate change. They also named the project!

Boys in HMYOI Feltham

Our Inside Stories with Audible project is flexible to the needs and interests of each group. In the first session, we find out what area/topic they want to focus on and then tailor future sessions to support the creation of their audio content.

Thank you

criminaljustice
@literacytrust.org.uk

Prison Library Connect:
Developing an online hub of information and resources for prison library staff

Jayne Finlay and Giulia Romana Neri
The University of Sheffield

Where did the idea come from?

"What would be interesting would be to have the opportunity to talk to other library staff more about what they do, pick their brains and get some ideas."

someway/where to share programs/resources that have worked could save us a lot of time and reinventing the wheel.

Success stories for inspiration!

Practice and advice sharing in relation to different problems, conflicts or concerns whilst working in and with prison libraries

centralised list (with general info) of organisations deemed suitable for working with prison libraries- I find it hard to remember them all!

Shared Resources for PrisonLibraries- for creating promotional materials- posters/ signage/ branding

Opportunity to discuss challenges and share similar issues faced by those working in prison libraries

Getting it off the ground!

Knowledge Exchange Project between the University of Sheffield's Information School and CILIP's Prison Libraries Group

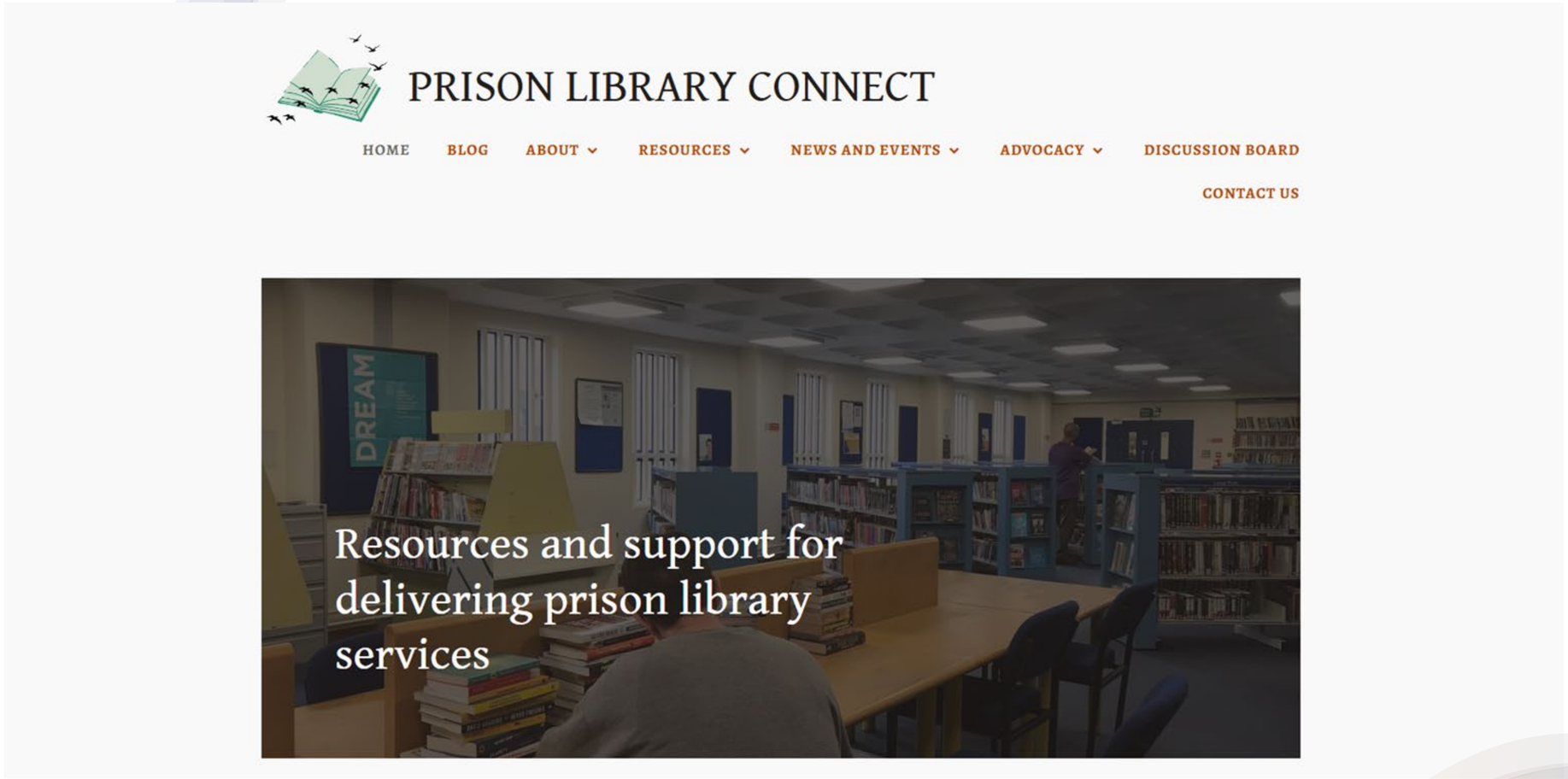
cilip
prison libraries group

What does the website aim to do?

- To provide a **central hub of information** and resources for prison library staff
- To enable **connections** between prison library staff, and connections with others involved in supporting prison library provision (e.g. public libraries, reading / literacy organisations)
- To keep staff **in-the-know** about relevant news, policy updates, events etc
- To provide a space to **share good practice**
- To **celebrate** the positive work going on in prison libraries
- To **support advocacy efforts** for prison library services

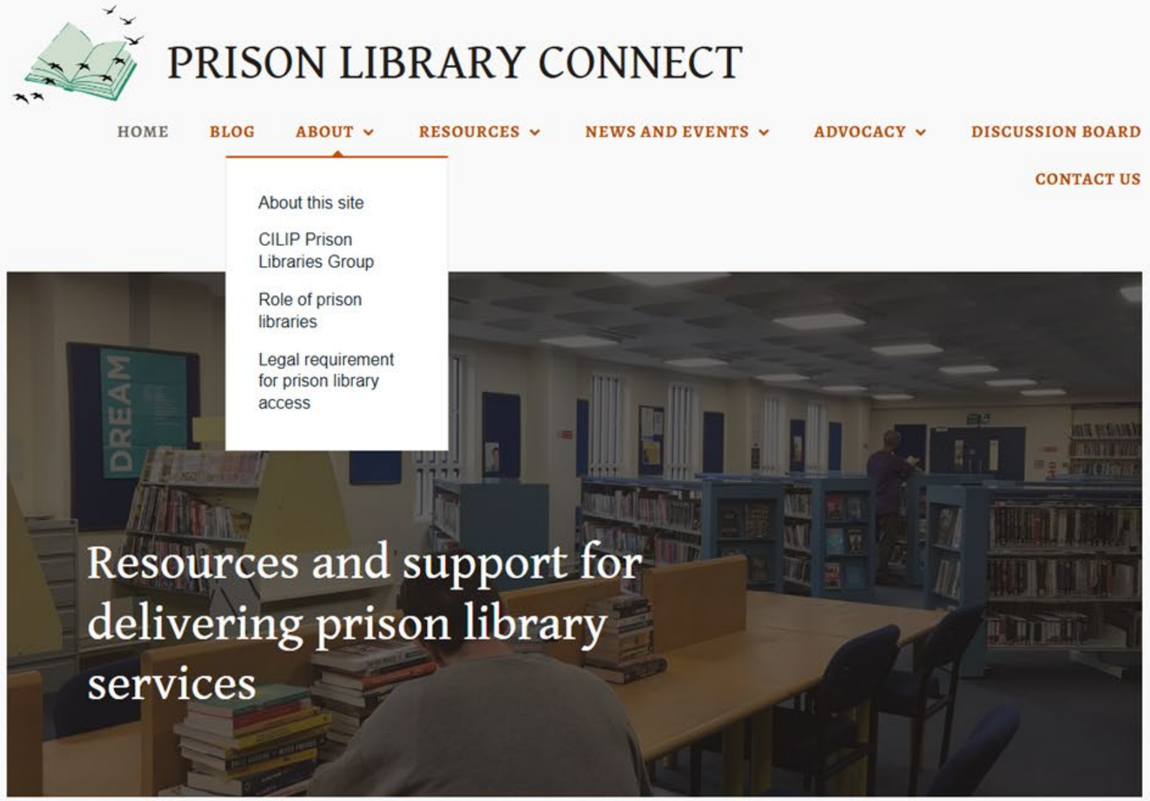
Who is the website for?

- Primarily **prison library staff** – at every stage of the career, including those just starting off in the profession
- **Public library staff** who work alongside / support prison libraries
- **Volunteers and external organisations** providing services to people in prison
- Others working within a prison setting
- Students (future professionals and researchers)
- Anyone else interested in and advocating for prison library services



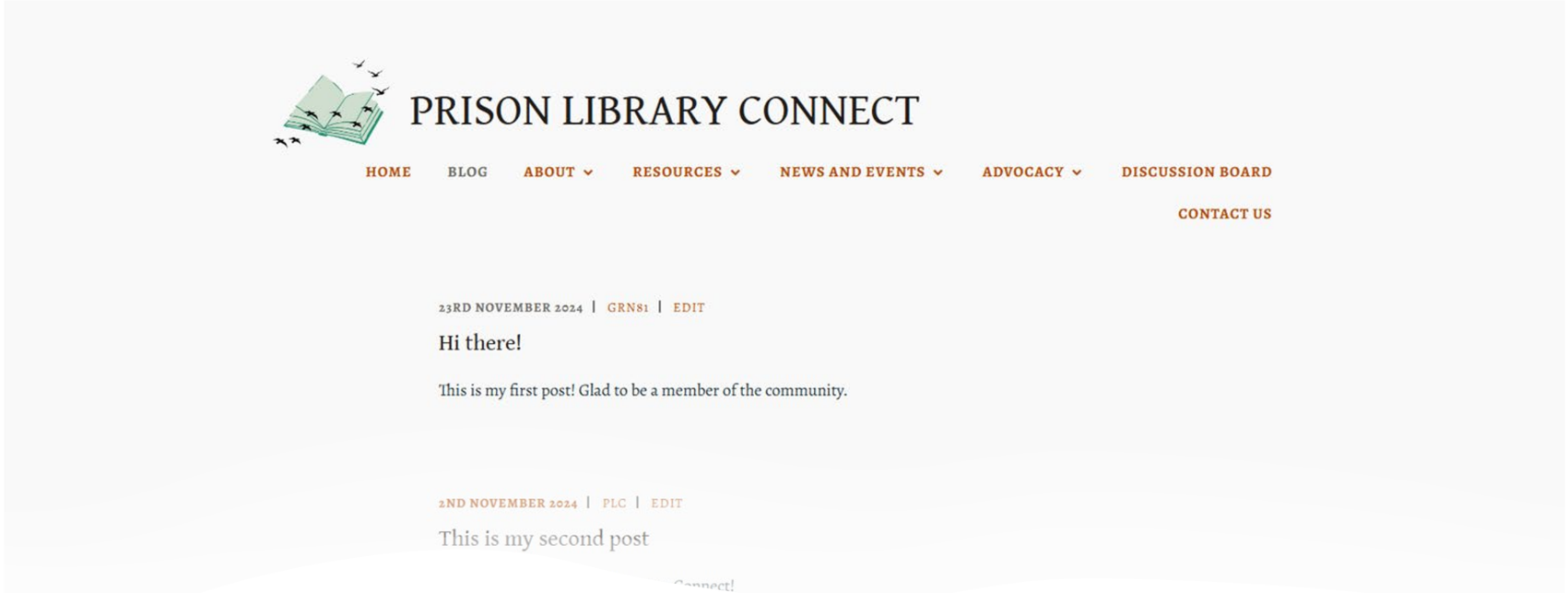
Introducing Our Resources and Advocacy for Prison Libraries

Prison Library Connect



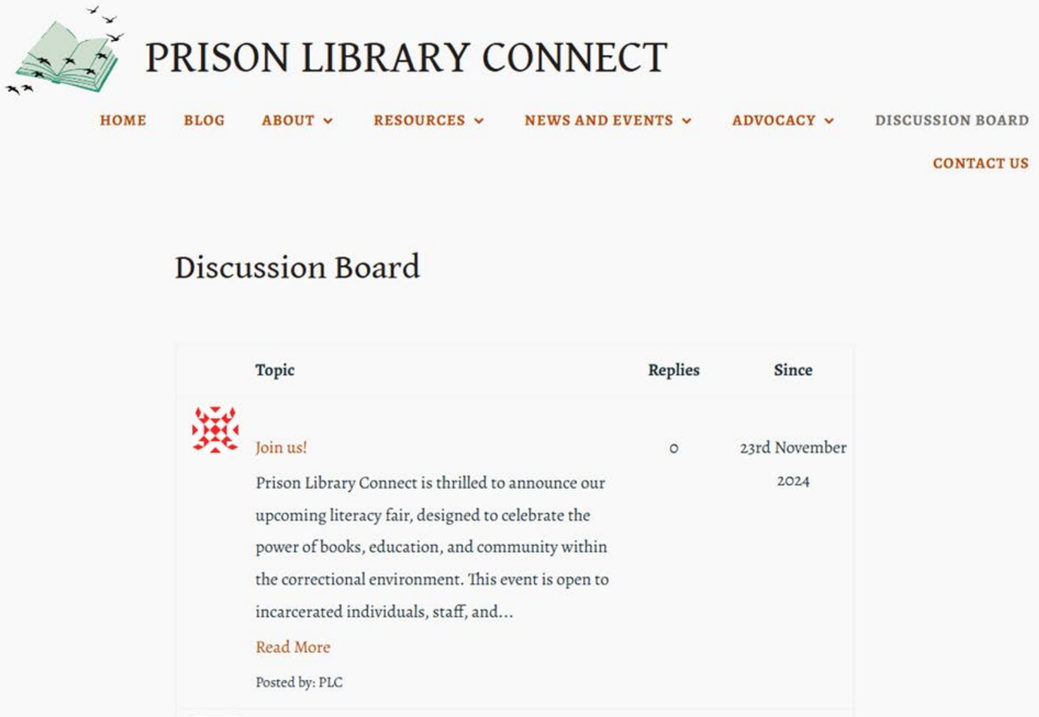
About the Website

- CILIP Prison Libraries Group
- Role of Prison Libraries
- Legal Requirements for Prison Library Access



Blog

- Updates on Prison Libraries
- Articles and Insights
- Explore Various Topics
- Book reviews
- Prisoner writing

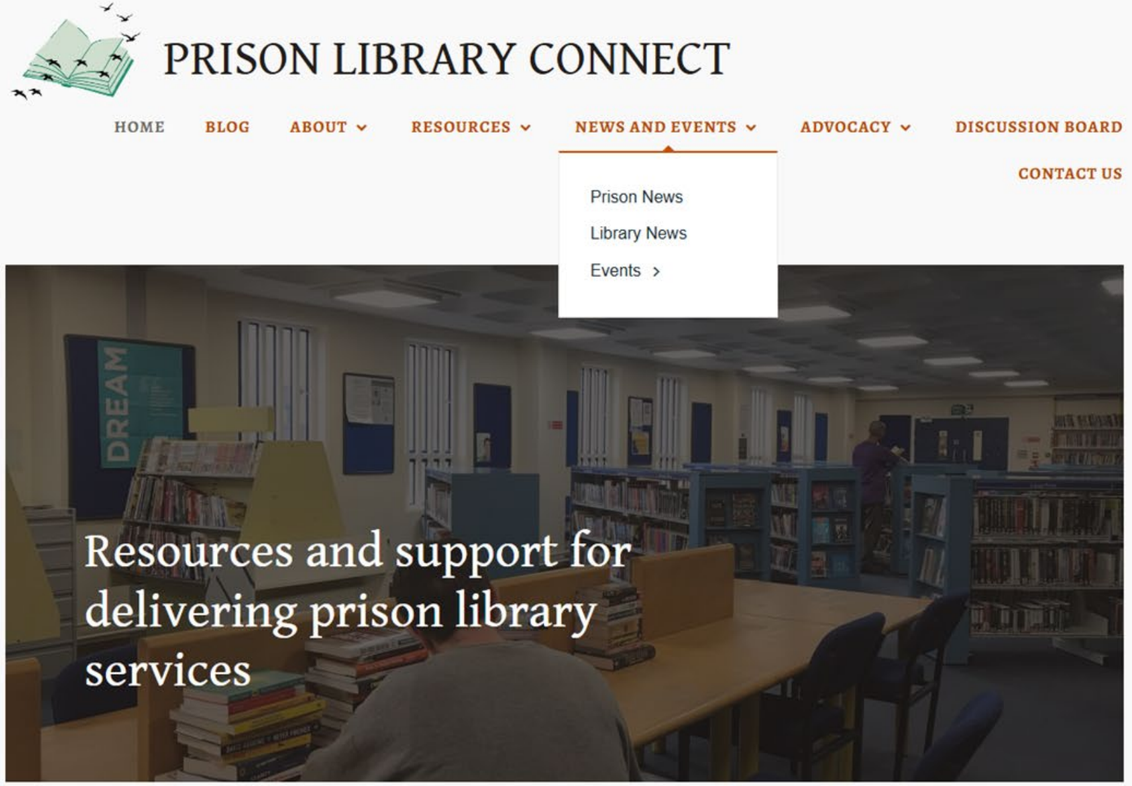


Discussion Board

- Engage in Community Discussions
- Share Experiences and Ideas
- Ask Questions and Get Support
- Connect with Fellow Librarians and Advocates
- Discuss Challenges and Solutions

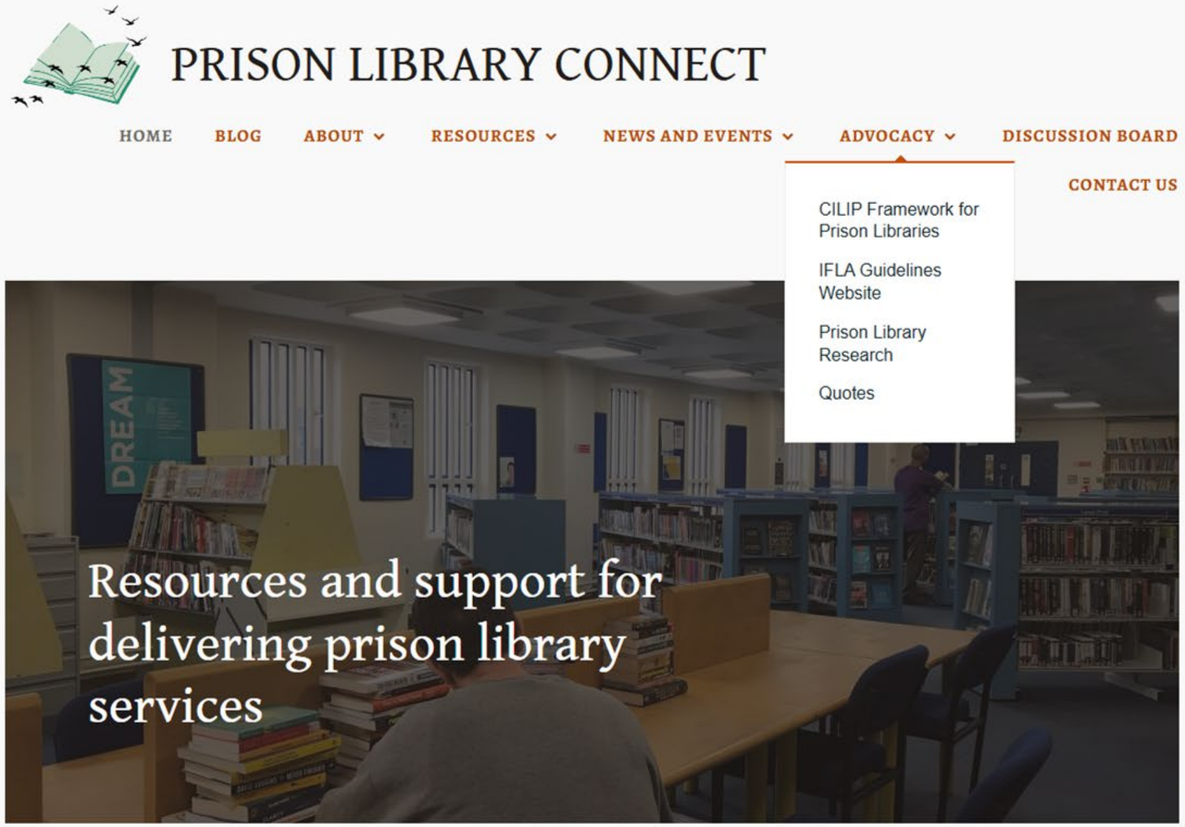
Resources

- Policies and Guidelines (Prison Rules 1999, Education Framework, etc.)
- Reading and Literacy Organizations
- Other Criminal Justice Organisations
- Stock Suppliers
- Promotional resources



News and Events

- Prison and Library News
- Upcoming Events:
- * CILIP Prison Libraries Training Day
- * PRG Events



Advocacy

- CILIP Framework
- IFLA Guidelines
- Prison Library Research
- Advocacy Quotes and Insights

Blog
Book reviews
Discussion forum
Information about external organisations
Promotional resources
Policies and guidelines
Prison library research
Criminal justice / prison news
Library news
Event updates

1. Which of these will you find useful **and why**?

2. Is there anything you would like to see on the website?

Call for blog posts

- Is there something you would like to share about the work going on in your library?
  - Examples: a successful event, an ongoing partnership, examples of prisoner writing (with permission), an opinion piece about working in prison libraries
- The post could be anywhere been 500 and 800 words
- It could be written collaboratively with other colleagues
- We could also record a short interview with you instead of a written post!
- Get in touch: prisonlibraryconnect@gmail.com

Call for book reviews

- What books or DVDs have been a hit with library borrowers?
- What books have your reading groups enjoyed?
- We would love to build a collection of book reviews ready to go when the site is launched
- This could be written by you or a library user (with permission)
- Get in touch: prisonlibraryconnect@gmail.com

What might the impact be and how might we measure that?

Impact / benefits for you

Impact / benefits for prisoners

Who else might benefit?