

Country Report: Denmark

On 22 - 23 March 2006, QCEA visited Ringe high security prison and Horserød open prison. This report is principally an account of these visits with an introduction on Danish prisons in general informed by several other sources. This is why the structure of this country report differs from that of the other country reports.

General

According to the International Centre for Prison Studies (ICPS),¹ the prison population in Denmark in October 2005 was 4,198 and there was a prison population rate of seventy-seven per 100,000 of the national population. Prisoners awaiting trial made up 25.1 per cent of the total prison population, juveniles made up 0.6 per cent, foreign prisoners made up 17.5 per cent of the total and female prisoners made up 4.6 per cent of the total prison population.

In Denmark, there are open and closed prisons used for sentenced prisoners and 'local prisons' (which are used for prisoners awaiting trial or prisoners serving very short sentences). These 'local prisons' are often located close to the courts. Sentences are short; more than half are three months or less and only fifteen per cent are one year or more.² Early release is possible. Detention spent awaiting trial is a maximum of four weeks. This can be renewed an unlimited number of times by the courts and does not apply to those charged with very serious crimes that carry a sentence of over six years. Prison sentences are not intended to act as a deterrent.

In Denmark ex-offenders face the same employment difficulties as in other countries. However, a criminal record is only valid for between five and ten years, depending on the crime. Private sector employers can request criminal records from five years back and government employers from ten years back.

Offenders suffering from mental disorders have enforced treatment and monitoring under certain conditions for an unlimited period. According to 'Prison de Femmes', the time spent in detention is generally longer for people with psychiatric disorders.³

Prison management philosophy and staff

A fundamental principle of the Danish prison system is 'normalisation'. The Prison and Probation Service handbook explains: 'experience has shown that the traditional prison situation can endanger attempts to help prisoners.... By establishing conditions which differ as little as possible from those obtaining in daily life outside prison, the grounds for aggression and apathy are reduced and the negative effects of a prison sojourn are limited.'⁴ For example, prisoners do not wear uniforms. 'Normalisation' attempts to cut reconviction by giving prisoners responsibility and operating a humane regime. There is not a reliance on courses and specialists to solve prisoners' problems, 'we don't have a course on cooking - they cook every day' [Governor of Ringe]. The whole day's timetable and way of living is intended to be rehabilitative. Staff at Horserød prison said treatment programmes took attention away from

¹ *International Centre for Prison Studies*, World Prison Brief, Prison Brief for Denmark [on-line], accessed 16 March 2007, available at <http://www.prisonstudies.org/>

² *British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)*, Lessons from Danish Prisons [on-line], accessed 2 April 2007, available (since 2 July 2003) at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3036450.stm>

³ *Prisons de femmes en Europe*, Observations Danemark [on-line], accessed 2 April 2007, available at <http://prisons.de.femmes.free.fr/danemark.html>

⁴ Denmark Ministry of Justice, Department of Prisons and Probation, *A Programme of Principles for Prison and Probation Work in Denmark*, 1994.

other prisoners as interaction would be focused there. However, pilot projects to run a parental skills programme are underway in a number of prisons. Deputy Director General of the Prison and Probation Service in Denmark, Annette Esdorf, says: 'We make an effort to keep crime down by treating the prisoners in the best way. We have a rather humane regime, not because of the prisoners, but because we think it works better this way.'⁵ Nevertheless, a survey by the University of Greifswald found that 48.1 per cent of women prisoners were in prison for the second time.⁶

The other principles governing the prison service are:⁷

- Openness: contacts between the prison and the community are strengthened.
- Exercise of Responsibility: this principle acknowledges that the 'lodging and service functions' of a prison lessen the prisoners' ability to cope with daily life and states that prison service work should be organised to develop offenders' 'sense of responsibility, self-respect and self-confidence', and motivate them to live a crime-free life.
- Security: protecting the community and prisoners from criminal acts.
- Least Possible Intervention: the problem solving methods that intrude the least in prisoners' lives should be used and early intervention is encouraged to 'prevent the development of unacceptable situations'.
- Optimum Use of Resources: using resources flexibly, effectively and in relation to perceived needs and therefore employing well-qualified, capable staff.
- None of these principles overrule others and all should be used on a daily basis to ensure outcomes that are consistent with all other principles.

These principles could be seen in the atmosphere of the prison and in talking to prison staff. Staff and prisoners appeared relaxed in each other's company. There was far less emphasis on the control of prisoners and less bureaucracy. Operating in this way also eliminates certain issues; for example, time out of cell is not a difficulty because prisoners are always out of their cells; conjugal visits are not complicated for the prison to arrange because they take place as a matter of course during normal visits.

The research undertaken by the University of Greifswald found that average age of staff members is 40.8 years and the average length of their service is 9.9 years. 29.4 per cent of the staff members who work with women are men.⁸ Female staff, especially young female staff, sometimes have difficulties with ethnic minority prisoners who do not respect them; this varies from prison to prison. According to a lawyer working for the Prison and Probation service, "women guards are often better than men at calming down a prisoner who is getting angry".⁹ In Denmark, several women guards note that being a woman is an advantage.¹⁰

⁵ BBC, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3036450.stm>

⁶ Dünkel, F., C. Kestermann, & J. Zolondek, 'Internationale Studie zum Frauenstrafvollzug, Bestandsaufnahme, Bedarfsanalyse und 'best practice'', (Department of Criminology: University of Greifswald, 2005), p. 7.

⁷ *Kriminal Forsorgen*, Vigtig information [on-line], accessed on 20 March 2007, available at <http://www.kriminalforsorgen.dk/>

⁸ Dünkel et al., 'Internationale Studie zum Frauenstrafvollzug, Bestandsaufnahme, Bedarfsanalyse und 'best practice'', p. 7.

⁹ BBC, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3036450.stm>

¹⁰ Extracts from the report of the Working Party, set up by the Danish Prison and Probation Service to make a detailed study of the nature and extent of present and potential problems arising between groups of prisoners of non-Danish ethnic background (particularly young offenders of under twenty-five) and other prisoners and staff in the Prison Service's institutions and units, p. 47.

Women in prison

The offences most commonly committed by women are drug offences (as is the case in many other European countries). Homicide and robbery are in joint second place.¹¹

The number of ethnic minority women in prison has doubled since 2000. Six per cent of the prisoners with an ethnic minority background are women. More are under probation than in prison, but it is in prisons where the rise has been most dramatic. Women of ethnic minority background tend to come from Europe and Latin America with only a small proportion of Arab origin. This contrasts with men of ethnic minority background who are usually of Arab origin. Ethnic minority women are also somewhat older than ethnic minority men, an average of thirty-five years, whereas for men the average is thirty.¹² The average age of the women in prison surveyed by the University of Greifswald was 37.6 years.¹³ Male prisoners of ethnic minority background tend to stick together and so dominate smaller units to the detriment of the whole unit. This is more problematic with the under-25 group; no such problems have been noted amongst female ethnic minorities.

- Alcohol problems amongst Danish women prisoners are rather high at 15.4% and only 11.5% of these women receive treatment.
- As usual drug problems are more widespread than alcohol problems: 34.5% of women wish to receive treatment for drug problems whilst 27.6% are already receiving help.¹⁴ 11.1% of women are receiving treatment for psychological problems whilst 37% of women need help, showing a large gap in service provision.
- 40.7% show heightened or high symptoms of depression and 17.9% have a heightened or high self-harm risk.¹⁵
- The majority of female prisoners completed between nine and ten years of schooling but only 26.9% finished their education at eighteen.¹⁶
- 57.7% of women in prison are mothers.¹⁷

Fact finding visit to Ringe prison

In March 2006, QCEA visited Ringe high security prison, Denmark.

There are eighty-six places at Ringe. There are not a fixed number of places for women because many of them serve their sentences in the same sections as men. It is the only closed prison holding women in Denmark. The average age for women is thirty-one whereas the average age for men is twenty-one. Most women are serving sentences for drug-related crimes.

¹¹Düinkel *et al.*, '*Internationale Studie zum Frauenstrafvollzug, Bestandsaufnahme, Bedarfsanalyse und 'best practice'*', p. 23.

¹² Extracts from the report of the Working Party set up by the Danish Prison and Probation Service to make a detailed study of the nature and extent of present and potential problems arising between groups of prisoners of non-Danish ethnic background (particularly young offenders of under 25) and other prisoners and staff in the Prison Service's institutions and units, p. 97.

¹³ Düinkel *et al.*, '*Internationale Studie zum Frauenstrafvollzug, Bestandsaufnahme, Bedarfsanalyse und 'best practice'*', p. 7.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 27.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 30.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 7 and 21.

There are four places for juveniles (male or female) and the sexes are held together. These are the only closed prison places for juveniles in Denmark. If juveniles break the rules in other institutions they may be sent to Ringe. If juveniles are held at Ringe they get more attention than the other prisoners, such as being provided with their own social worker and more education. The governor could only remember one girl having been sent to Ringe.

There are 120 employees, most of whom are 'prison personnel'. Members of staff do not have any gender awareness training although the three-year prison officer training does touch on this. Prisoners thought that staff members were aware of gender differences, although the social worker appeared more doubtful and said staff could be better. The social worker said that gender made a difference in her work, for example, women have more family problems leading to more frequent liaisons with foster families and arranging of family visits.

The prison

The prison is approached through enormous solid blue gates which have a doorway cut into them. One walks through what looks like a huge parking lot, then outside into a smaller outdoor car park and into a much more human reception area. Prison officers sit behind a glassed-in reception desk where they monitor the CCTV; there are a couple of chairs and free lockers in which to deposit bags and coats. The visiting rooms are through a door to one side of this reception area. A staircase leads up to the main prison.

There is a five metre high wall around the prison. The prison is built on the side of a hill which allows prisoners to see out over the surrounding countryside. There is also a high fence, which is not overly conspicuous and CCTV. The fence is a recent addition and is to stop drugs, mobile phones and weapons being thrown over the wall rather than to stop prisoners escaping. 'Close contact between personnel and detainees' is also cited as a security measure by the Ministry of Justice. There have been a few escapes in the last ten years, but not recently.

Every prisoner has his or her own cell. Cells are a minimum of 7.4m², although this varies. When furnished they feel cramped.

There is an isolation section for disciplinary offences. If caught with drugs prisoners may spend up to seven days in isolation, depending on the amount found. If prisoners are violent to other prisoners they may get seven days in isolation or longer if there is a fear that s/he will be violent again. If prisoners are violent against staff they will normally be sent to another prison. If prisoners refuse to work they will be in isolation between 08:00 and 15:00 while the other prisoners are at work.

There is a hall which is used for sports, external lectures, plays and films (a large projector screen is lowered).

There is a library and a professional librarian comes in once a week. Although the library is small, books can be ordered and there are also magazines.

The prison has an infirmary where sick prisoners stay during work time. The prisoners are not locked up. We did not visit the infirmary but saw a small room where prisoners could rest if they needed. The room contained a TV and sofas but was institutional and not very cheerful. The room was a former classroom which was going to be refurbished, after which it would be used for another purpose. If prisoners are sick for a longer period, they are allowed to stay in their own section.

There is a well-equipped arts & crafts room and a teacher to help the prisoners with painting, glasswork, sewing, modelling etc. This facility is for women only. There were six women there at the time of the visit.

Foreign national and ethnic minority prisoners

In 2005, sixty per cent of the prisoners came from abroad; a recent count showed twenty-four different nationalities within the prison (no gender breakdown available). Most foreign nationals are held for drug trafficking. The prison has its own imam and on Fridays prayers are held in a common room in the prison. Ethnic minority prisoners include foreign nationals who will return to their home country on completion of sentence and foreign nationals who will stay in Denmark after their sentence, e.g. asylum seekers and Danish ethnic minority prisoners. These prisoners require different approaches from the prison.

Recently, staff have been trying to do more with prisoners from an immigrant background, particularly on integration, and the prison has been trying to obtain more resources for this. The prison rules are available in a wide variety of languages. English and Danish classes are offered. One foreign national we spoke to said she had had the opportunity to serve her sentence in her home country, America, but had chosen to stay in Denmark. She told us Ringe was a good prison with good staff who were easy to talk to: “they’re very human” she said. She reported that access to a lawyer had been good and this was a view which was supported by other prisoners and the social worker.

Accommodation

The prison has seven sections. Each section receives a different kind of prisoner. The prisoners are placed on the sections after a visitation is done of the whole prison but not all prisoners can be placed in the most suitable section from the beginning.

All cell doors have two locks; one for the prisoner and one for the staff. The staff have the keys to both locks. At night time all doors are locked with the staff locks. We visited before 15:00 when prisoners were at work/school and the outside doors to the unit were locked. In free time (after 15:00), prisoners can wander freely into the grounds behind their section where they can meet prisoners from other sections. Prisoners have to get permission to visit another section.

Most of the sections look the same: a locked glass door leads off the central corridor. There is a guard’s office with an internal window looking onto the corridor; the office has two locked doors leading into and out of the unit. Whilst we were standing there prisoners came in freely. There is another door so that the unit can be entered without going through the office. Toilets, showers (no baths), washing machine and a telephone are opposite. Next to these there is a large common area with a tiled, well-equipped kitchen with two ovens, stove etc. A second common room leads off this with a TV, sofas and table-football. The rooms felt institutional and were not very cheerful. In some units the walls were painted and there were pictures but not in others.

The drug-free unit has sixteen places and is mixed. Prisoners on this unit said that it was “cosier” and that they “did things together”. They said that theirs was the best unit and attributed this to the lack of drugs: “people are the same people all the time”. There are no more freedoms in this unit than in others but the lack of drugs leads to a more relaxed and supportive atmosphere. A corner of the common room was equipped as a play area with shelves for toys and a rocking horse. The mother we spoke to expressed concern that the dials on the cooker were low enough for her son to be able to turn the electric cooker on.

The male section also has sixteen places. These men are not hard drug users, although cannabis is used. They have to leave the section if they are found to have taken hard drugs or use cannabis frequently.

The women's section (sixteen places) has some hard drug users. Couples are allowed to live there but only if the man is not threatening to women. It is possible to have visits from men as long as they accept the rules of the section. Prisoners on the drug-free unit said that there was 'too much arguing and bitching' on the women's section.

A further sixteen-place, mixed section accommodates hard drug users. Isolation is not used often as a punishment as the prison believes it worsens the problem.

The protected section has eight places; at present two women and six men. This section is designed for those prisoners who are frightened of other prisoners and feel they cannot cope on an ordinary section; they are often those with drug problems. There are more members of staff on this section.

There is a sixteen-place drug treatment section (also called the Contract Section) for those wanting to give up drugs. The philosophy and management are different and the prisoners are kept separate from other prisoners. Teachers go to them if they are taking classes, so tuition is often one-to-one. At the time of our visit there were twelve prisoners on the unit. Prisoners can be sent to a similar unit in another prison if there are not enough places. The social worker said the prison needs more staff with drug training.

The Contract Section is very different to the rest of the prison. There is an emphasis on group responsibility and close personal contact.¹⁸ It is a drug-free unit and prisoners are subjected to random drug tests. One prisoner told us, "we don't fight, we don't take drugs." The prisoners here are quite separate from the rest of the prisoners and do not work or do classes with the others. Prisoners can go out into their garden whenever they want. The Contract Section has its own greenhouse where they grow vegetables in summer and their own little workshop where they make candles and repair bicycles. Next to the workshop is a 'conference room' where meetings, which take place at least three times a week, are held to discuss how things are going in the unit.

The Contract Section is much more homely and less institutional than the other units. There is a large kitchen where the prisoners eat together; they have a rota for cooking. Two corridors run off this with bigger, comfortably furnished bedrooms (TV, fridge, wardrobe etc.); some bedrooms are larger and contain a sofa as well. There is a small room used just as a telephone room, with a table, comfortable chair and photographs on the walls. There is a laundry room and prisoners set their own times for using the washing machine so as not to cause arguments. There is a small computer room; the prisoners earned the money to buy the computers themselves doing construction work nearby. Once a year, a week's sailing trip is organised. At the time of our visit there was only one woman in this section (she was on leave at the time so was unable to talk to us). When asked if she found it difficult being the only woman in the unit a male prisoner replied "She fits in OK, it was better when there were two women to talk to each other, so now we look out for her."

The prisoners can operate alarm bells from within their cells.

Work and education

The educational level of prisoners entering the prison varies greatly.

Prisoners can take classes in work hours: Danish and English for foreigners and Maths, English and History in preparation for the Higher Preparative Exams (taken at age sixteen in the community); over a period of between three and four years it is possible to pass Higher Preparative Exams.

¹⁸ *Kriminal Forsorgen*, available at <http://www.kriminalforsorgen.dk/>

When we asked two prisoners for suggestions for improving the prison they highlighted the school, saying: six computer places are not enough, it is difficult to get a whole education in prison, and that more people wanted self-study programmes. A female prisoner said it would be good to have more classes just for women because 'boys' were disruptive and it was difficult to concentrate. She did acknowledge that this would be very difficult as there were few women and many of them were at Ringe for a short amount of time.

Many prisoners both work and attend classes. The governor told us that motivation is a problem and prisoners find it difficult to sit and concentrate all day, so prisoners break from their work to attend classes for short periods of time. This is expensive as jobs must be held for prisoners who are studying but it is better for prisoners this way. Approximately fifty per cent of prisoners are in some form of education. Educational statistics are questionable as education is not strictly defined, for example, prisoners study current affairs with guards in informal settings.

There is no vocational education although the Governor thought this would be useful. The prison hopes to employ more teachers soon and is trying to obtain more funding for this.

Prisoners may go out of the prison for education but only a few do this. 'If you do, you must be strong', prisoners told us, 'because people ask you to bring stuff in'. Thus prisoners who go out will probably be on the drug-free unit.

There is a cognitive skills programme where 'we learn about ourselves and others', anger, boundaries etc. Prisoners must be able to speak Danish to attend. Female prisoners said this was more useful for men.

Every prisoner is able to work in workshops (woodwork, assembly and production) as well as cleaning and maintenance.

Health and drugs

There are two full-time nurses and a doctor and a dentist are available once a week. The two medical rooms seemed well-equipped with dental equipment, examining tables etc. Children who stay in the prison can also see the doctor. Prisoners go out to hospitals to see specialists or when they have more serious medical conditions.

The prison does not have an HIV/AIDS plan. There is no needle exchange programme. Bleach is available for the prisoners from the guard's office. If a prisoner has HIV it is not common knowledge. One prisoner said that people should know for their own protection.

There is a central secure facility for mentally ill offenders so there should be no severe psychiatric cases at Ringe. There are psychologists attached to the prison. The governor told us that more prisoners should go and see the psychologists but many do not want to and sessions are voluntary. This is often the case with foreign nationals whose cultural traditions do not include psychology as a matter of course. If needed, a psychiatrist can visit from neighbouring hospitals (which are close by) but this seldom happens. The doctor and (very experienced) nurse do take on some cases.

Self-harm is not common in the prison and, unusually, is at the same level amongst men as it is with women (usually it is women prisoners who are more likely to self-harm). The social worker thought this was because women talk about their problems more than men and that male prisoners don't know "how they're supposed to behave, they're mixed up", especially those from immigrant backgrounds who feel family pressures which do not correspond with their reality. There was one suicide around five years ago. A 2005 report by the University of

Greifswald reported that no suicides or suicide attempts occurred in four prisons in Denmark during the year [unknown] they were surveyed.¹⁹

Drugs are a big problem throughout the prison. As in all prisons they lead to violence and intimidation. Although there is a high fence surrounding the prison, drugs can still be thrown over the fence. Injecting heroin is not common practice although prisoners do smoke it. Cannabis is the most common drug and cocaine and ecstasy are also taken. Methadone is available in all sections apart from the contract section.

Although prisoners are strip-searched before and after a visit, the prison does not rely on searches to find drugs but on the close contact between staff and prisoners which leads staff to notice changes in behaviour. This is successful and a lot of drugs are confiscated (cannabis most regularly and harder drugs more rarely).

The governor told us that what was important were the reasons why prisoners were taking drugs and that nothing should be done that would worsen the problem. Although the prison is authorised to carry out internal body searches this is only allowed when the prison has good reason to expect that drugs are being smuggled in at precisely that moment and this occurs less than once per year. The prison used internal searches more in the past but few drugs were found in this way. It is thought that internal body searches are humiliating for the prisoner and will make the security situation worse not better. There is also a commode that can be used to confiscate drugs that have been swallowed. Again, this is almost never used as it requires constant staff surveillance and is humiliating for the prisoner. Thus there is a prisoner and human rights-centred approach to keeping drugs out of prisons.

The governor said that help is available for drug addicts if they are motivated to take it. Sometimes concentrating on drug addicts means other prisoners get left out.

Family contact and children

Visiting children are allowed to see their mother's or father's room once. This is not dependent on which section the prisoner is living in. At the time of the visit, two children were able to visit their parents regularly in the drug-free section. Such a situation could be allowed in other sections as well.

Visits are at the weekends in three-hour slots, and two slots can be booked at a time if there are rooms available and the visitor comes from far away. One prisoner told us that if visitors cannot come at the weekend, staff are flexible in allowing the visit to take place at another time. The visiting rooms are on the ground floor near the entrance. There are two detectors that scan for metal and drugs. Small visiting rooms (off a long corridor) are equipped with a sink, sofa bed, chairs and table; a door leads out onto enclosed grounds and a small play area for children. Chains had been fitted to stop the outside doors opening fully because prisoners had been going outside and threatening each other. There is a much bigger family room which has lots of toys for children's visits. Two prisoners would never be expected to share the room for their visits but this may be allowed if they wanted to.

There is a full kitchen at the end of the corridor. The visiting rooms are institutional and not cheerful; however the whole visiting unit will be refurbished soon. At the time of the visit, the prison was deciding whether to create a space to allow visitors to stay overnight. No special arrangements need to be made for conjugal visits as all visits are in private rooms so there is no difference between conjugal and non-conjugal visits. A guard will only sit in on the visit if staff members have good reason to suspect drugs will be passed. This rarely happens.

¹⁹ Dünkel *et al.*, *'Internationale Studie zum Frauenstrafvollzug, Bestandsaufnahme, Bedarfsanalyse und 'best practice'*, p. 38.

A female prisoner cannot be searched by a male guard and vice versa. The prison is allowed to search visitors down to their underwear but this is only done if a visitor is thought to be a particular risk. Prisoners are strip searched before and after visits. A prisoner told us that the experience of being searched depends on the guard. She said it is better if the guard knows her because she (the guard) will know that she does not take drugs and will chat during the search. If the guard does not know the prisoners they are more suspicious and less relaxed.

The guards' attitude towards children varies; some are friendlier than others. The local authority can prevent children visiting the prison if it is not in the child's best interest to do so. It is sometimes difficult if parents have to be searched.

Prisoners can have their children in prison until the age of three. Children living in the prison will be in the drug-free section or in the women's section. In Denmark, kindergartens only receive children over two years old. Younger children at Ringe are sent to day care, so their mothers are able to work and take classes.

At the time of the visit there was one child in the prison. Both his parents were serving a sentence at Ringe and all three lived in the drug-free unit. Usually a mother can have two cells, one for the child and one for herself. This was not the case for this child as he was at cared for during the day and the administration had not wanted to deprive another prisoner of a place on the popular drug-free unit. The mother had a cot in her room as well as other furniture and the room was crowded.

The decision about whether to have children living in prison with their mother is not made by the prison; if the local authorities say that the mother is fit to look after her child then it is the mother's decision whether to have her child with her or not. All efforts are made to ensure mother and children are not separated when the child reaches her/his third birthday. There is a halfway house in Copenhagen and if possible, depending on the length of sentence, a mother and her child can be transferred there.

Offending couples are allowed to stay on a unit together. If one half of a couple should be in a low security prison he/she can choose to serve their time in a high security prison to be with their partner.

A woman prisoner can only visit a male prisoner if they are a genuine couple and have been together for at least one month. To make sure that they are a genuine couple, members of staff from the men's and women's sections have a meeting and discuss this. This is done to avoid prostitution. The two female prisoners interviewed on the visit thought that this was a very good rule and said it made prostitution (for drugs) by female prisoners less likely although it does still happen.

On admission to Ringe, women are asked whether or not they have children and the information is put on their file. Parental status does not impact on the sentence, e.g. prisoners do not get more leave if they are parents. However, it will be taken into account if prisoners ask permission for leave, such as when a child is ill.

There are phones on all the units and calling time is unlimited. Prisoners are restricted to calling only four phone numbers. Prisoners have to buy their own phone cards. Writing paper is free.

Prisoners with sentences over a certain length can apply for home leave.

Social work and resettlement

Within four weeks of starting their sentence, a prisoner will make a sentence plan which covers issues such as resettlement and leave. Ringe has three social workers for the eighty-six prisoners (the equivalent of 'two and a half social workers' work with the eighty-two adults and 'half a social worker' works with the juveniles). It is not possible for the social workers to have contact with all the prisoners and usually the prisoners have close contact with a contact person who is supervised by the social workers. In this way, the prisoners get much more help than if they had direct contact with only the social workers.

The contact officer also has to fulfil a disciplinary function and some prisoners said this dual role was sometimes difficult as 'the next day you're supposed to be confidential with them'. Also, contact officers may not be available for a month at a time if they are working as activity supervisors. However, prisoners said that, despite this, it was good that staff were 'not there just to lock doors'.

Most of the social worker's job is to do with resettlement; it is her decision whether or not to give parole and she will contact the local authorities to arrange it. Prisoners must have accommodation and a job or education to be eligible. Decisions regarding probation for prisoners serving sentences of eight years or more are the responsibility of the central administration and not the governor.

Prisoners may be transferred to an open prison to serve the last part of their sentence and there are also halfway houses. Young people are usually entitled to parole. Parole often lasts for two years during which time ex-offenders have to meet regularly with a social worker to make sure they are sticking to their plan. There are no set procedures for resettlement and parole and these depend on the individual.

Prisoners in open prisons may be sent to a high security prison as a disciplinary measure.

Fact finding visit to Horserød prison

In March 2006, QCEA visited Horserød open prison, Denmark. Information for this report was obtained both directly from the visit and from an introduction to the prison edited by the educational coordinator at the prison and a special consultant.

General

Horserød is the second largest prison in Denmark (221 beds) and is an open prison which holds women. An open prison in Denmark is one without an external perimeter wall. 1000 prisoners pass through Horserød each year and the average stay is three months. Less than one fifth of the prisoners are women, with approximately 250 men and between thirty and forty women. Women from Greater København and the islands east of the Great Belt²⁰ are placed here. The average age of women prisoners is twenty-three years, and only ten per cent are over forty.

Many juvenile delinquent schools in Denmark have been closed down so there are sometimes juveniles held in Horserød. Juveniles are defined as between fifteen and seventeen years old. At the time of the visit, all the juveniles were boys and staff could not remember any girls being sent there. There are currently discussions taking place to decide whether people under twenty-five, who are in work or education, should be electronically monitored rather than sent to prison. Generally, efforts are made to keep juveniles out of prison.

²⁰ The Great Belt (Danish: Storebælt) is a strait between the main Danish islands of Zealand and Funen. See Wikipedia [on-line], available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Belt

Prisoners do not have a holistic plan for their sentence, although if a social worker is involved they will have knowledge of other aspects of a prisoner's life. Prisoners do have a key worker, but this poses difficulties as officers are on shift. There are six or seven welfare officers. Welfare officers attempt to build a network between prisoners' relations and social services outside the prison, taking account of the women's situation, but 'it is a struggle'. There are as many female staff members as male.

When prisoners have served two thirds of their sentence they may be released on parole and this happens for eighty per cent of prisoners. Welfare officers organise parole, finding out if prisoners have work and accommodation to go to, although in principle it is the Governor who gives permission. External social workers will be involved when there is already a connection with that prisoner. Prisoners may also be granted leave for leisure activities and are escorted by prison officers. Leave may be cancelled if it is abused.

The prison has 150 staff, including personnel who are employed on an hourly basis. Staff are organised according to the 'AUF model'; for four months staff work as occupational supervisors in prison workshops, for twelve months as security officers (dealing with disciplinary problems). Staff also work as case or liaison officers (dealing with issues concerning individual prisoners) and as instructors in leisure and hobby activities.

Recidivism here is lower than for the high security prisons.

The prison

There is no external fence to the prison and the prison looks more like a university campus. There is CCTV but it is not fully monitored as there are not enough staff to watch the screens. There are approximately 100 escapes per year and 'we have settled for that' senior staff told us. The situation will be reviewed if the number changes. Men escape more than women. Some prisoners have asked to be in a high security prison because they think they would break the rules in a low security prison and get into trouble.

Prisoners have the key to their own cells and are never locked in. The front doors to departments are locked at 21:15. There are morning and evening roll calls. In all parts of the prison frisk searches are carried out and sniffer dogs used. Prisoners can use the well-kept grounds freely during the day. According to staff, the relaxed atmosphere helps with security and suicide risk. An officer told us she had never been verbally or physically assaulted by a prisoner. Dumbbells are used in the gym and knives in the kitchen and the staff were not concerned that these heightened the risk of violence within the prison: 'they will always find something, or use their fists'. Our guide could only remember one case when someone had been attacked with a bread knife. There are some racial tensions in the prison. In harassment cases the harasser will be moved to a closed prison.

The prison has one drug treatment unit for women only and four other mixed sex units. However, men and women resident in single sex units work together. Staff described the mixed sex unit as relaxed as it was more normal. Staff told us the difference in atmosphere between a mixed unit and an all male unit is bigger than that between a mixed unit and an all women unit. Women themselves choose whether to serve their sentence in a mixed or single sex unit. Women who have experienced male violence or abuse often choose a single sex unit.

Bedrooms lead off one side of a corridor (which is rather dark). Bedrooms contain a sink and small cupboard, a fridge, wardrobe, bed, desk, chair and sometimes a chest of drawers. The walls are white. Prisoners can bring radios and TVs in. Prisoners appear to bring quite a lot of personal possessions with them. There are common showers and toilets on the units.

There is a thirteen-bed, all-women drug treatment unit receiving women from all over Denmark who volunteer for drug treatment. There is no compulsory drug treatment. Women in this unit have 'hard histories' and have often been prostitutes prior to imprisonment with histories of abuse. The unit is run according to 'project humanity' principles. The project is half-funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs and run by external workers assisted by guards. Family issues are addressed on the programme. Children are not allowed on the unit. The project includes confidence-building workshops and rehabilitative work, e.g. massage classes, as women on the programme frequently have histories of violence and abuse and have never experienced touch as a positive thing. Members of staff on this unit say they are understaffed.

There mixed drug-free unit with twenty-two places. Prisoners have to sign a no-drugs contract and submit to regular testing. If they are found to have taken drugs they are excluded from the unit. Prisoners who have never taken drugs can be on this unit as well as those trying to stop taking drugs. It is generally a relaxed unit.

There is a mixed, semi-closed unit for 'inmates who cannot manage on an open unit'. As this phrasing suggests, prisoners are not in the semi-open section for disciplinary measures but for their own protection. Sex offenders who are likely to be bullied or ostracised are kept there, also drug-abusers, who may be pushed by others to take drugs. Unlike the rest of the prison there is an obvious fence surrounding the unit; however this is there to keep other prisoners out rather than inmates in. These prisoners are granted leave just the same as the others.

A fourteen-bed family unit provides accommodation for parents with children of less than three years of age and for married couples where both partners have committed a crime. This is for couples who were together before the start of the sentence. There is one cell for a couple with children which consists of a room for the parents and a connecting door to a room for the child.

In Denmark the prison sends a letter to prisoners requesting them to come to prison after the judge passes sentence. This gives prisoners more opportunity to make arrangements for any children they have. At the time of our visit there were only three children residing in the prison. Separation is extremely rare as sentences are so short. Staff could not remember a case where a mother and child had been separated. Women with long sentences do not bring their children to prison.

Whether a baby resides in prison is the mother's choice. Discussions take place with external social services. It is more usual to have a foster family caring for the child than for children to stay in prison. Mothers have cots in the cells with them. Other prisoners are not allowed inside the family unit for the safety of children and it is a drug-free unit. Prisoners told us there is no bullying in this unit as there is in other units and they try to take care of each other. We spoke to one prisoner whose daughter and grandchild were inside and thus she had chosen to be in the family unit.

Mothers are under no obligation to undertake purposeful activity as the other prisoners are, but if they wish to work or study their child (ren) can go to an external kindergarten. There is no qualified childminder or nurse within the unit although, when asked, staff said this would be beneficial. Children can be taken out to visit family members for short visits. Mothers can also be given leave to take children outside the prison for activities, e.g. a children's theatre production. However, this is not particularly promoted by the prison so it rarely happens. Mothers can take their children out of the unit and visit other prisoners with their child. The effects of prison on children are not monitored. There is a gap in service provision for mothers who take drugs, as children are not allowed in the drug treatment unit; but these mothers can be in the family unit if they obey the rules and take no drugs when they are in the unit.

There is a unit holding prisoners awaiting trial, which, unlike the other units, was surrounded by a high barbed wire fence. This is a central government initiative and appears to be out of

keeping with the rest of the prison. Staff were unenthusiastic about the facility and said that prisoners are being held there who could be held in one of the open units. There were no women in the facility at the time of the visit.

Staff members have offices in the main corridors near the prisoners' rooms. This minimises any division between staff and prisoners.

There are large common rooms which contain well-equipped kitchens. Prisoners can use these whenever they want and are able to mix with prisoners from other units. The common rooms varied; some contained books, pool tables and table football, TVs and one had two birds in a cage.

Outside there was a barbecue that prisoners can use.

There is a room set aside for a church with a permanent altar and an organ used for Protestant services. This room is also used for concerts and meditation courses. Muslim and Catholic prisoners go to a mosque and Catholic church. There is also a part-time chaplain.

There is a library with a piano staffed by a librarian. There is a solarium.

There is a reasonably large gym with all the usual equipment. We were told that male prisoners were encouraged to use the gym for health and fitness reasons not for weight-lifting to gain muscle tone.

There are solitary confinement cells which are used for disciplinary purposes. Prisoners spend a maximum of three days there. Prisoners are sometimes confined to their own room if the solitary confinement cells are full. Prisoners are put in solitary confinement if they refuse to work. The other punishment is transferral to a closed prison or fines.

Work, education and training

Prisoners are under obligation to undertake thirty-seven hours a week of purposeful activity; within this, prisoners have a choice of work or education. Some prisoners work and study outside the prison three months before release. In fact, the average length of stay in Hørslev is three months so this is often possible very early on in the sentence. Not many prisoners take advantage of this scheme; it is primarily adapted for those prisoners who were already studying or working close by.

Work and education are in competition for participants. If there were more classes, some workshops would have to be cut. The Head of Education said prisoners seemed to have a positive attitude towards classes and wished for more subjects. Prisoners can combine part-time work and part-time education, although this is not encouraged by the workshops and not many prisoners do it.

Work

Prisoners work for the upkeep of the prison and most rebuilding and renovating jobs are done by prisoners. More women are involved in cleaning jobs than men. Traditionally feminine work is not provided but there used to be sewing which attracted more women. There are four commercial workshops: metal work, laundry, carpentry and assembly work, with places for between fifty and sixty prisoners. A few prisoners are in external work, approved by the prison.

From time to time, unemployment is a problem in the prison but prisoners still get paid as 'this is out of their hands'. Work is paid by the hour and prisoners are given weekly wages. One

prisoner told us she had earned just seven kroner (1 euro) for packing a box of fruit with 110 pieces of fruit. Prisoners can possess, bring in or be sent money up to a value of 1,500 Danish kroner (approximately 200 euros) at a time. Prisoners do their own shopping at the supermarket (where the products are behind glass) and their own cooking.

Education

On average, women prisoners have a higher educational level than men, reflecting the trend in the general population. Upon arrival the prisoner makes an education plan with staff. Teachers are employed by the Ministry of Justice; they thus attend meetings with the rest of the staff. Twenty-five prisoners take classes outside prison and twenty-five inside. There are fewer women than men in education.

It is known that recidivism drops when prisoners undertake education and that when recidivism does occur, there is a longer time lapse before a second crime is committed.

General Adult Education is offered, as it is in the community. Classes are available in Danish, English, and Mathematics and the level is that of sixteen year olds in the community. An external teacher comes in to teach computer science. External exams take place twice a year. Prisoners in education have internet access.

If prisoners were in education when they committed a crime the prison will discuss with them how to keep in contact with the institution. Prisoners may do distance study courses, either continuing studies they started outside prison, or beginning in prison.

Women on the drug treatment unit live separately and do not take classes with the other prisoners.

Training

Vocational training is limited. Prisoners may do apprenticeships in blacksmith work, gardening, and painting and decorating in the workshops; at the time of visit only one prisoner was doing an apprenticeship. More men undertake apprenticeships than women although a woman had recently undertaken one in painting and decorating. Vocational education can take place outside the prison in any subject. Prisoners have to pay something towards courses; they usually get the money from other family members. At the time of visit only a handful of prisoners are taking vocational courses outside prison, several as gardeners, one as a truck-driver and another in commercial business.

The cognitive skills programme is taught to classes of between four and eight people in a small seminar room with tables grouped together, flipchart, whiteboard etc. This room was vacant at the time of our visit, and so it was locked. There is increasing interest in this programme as word spreads and another room is in preparation.

Drugs

There is no needle exchange programme as it is thought to be condoning drug use but there is bleach freely available in the bathrooms for needle sterilisation. Prisoners can be transferred to other prisons for drug treatment. An officer told us that they try to keep hard drugs out but do not do much about soft drugs. Any heroin drug addicts at Horserød Prison are transferred to the closed prison.²¹

²¹ *Prisons de femmes en Europe*, available at <http://prisons.de.femmes.free.fr/danemark.html>

Health care

There are two nurses and one doctor at the prison. An external dentist comes in. Going out of the prison for medical treatment does not present a difficulty as it is an open prison and leave is generous. Like adults, children residing in the prison with their mothers can see the prison doctor but are also registered at an outside clinic where they go for their checkups and injections. We spoke to one pregnant prisoner who said her health care was good and that she had gone out of the prison for all the necessary scans and checks on time.

There is one part-time psychologist which we were told 'is definitely not enough'. Staff said there had been an increase in prisoners with mental illness: ten times more than ten years ago. If prisoners have severe mental health problems they will not be in Horserød, 'it depends if they are more dangerous than ill'. Staff agreed prison was not the right place for the mentally ill but there is a shortage of closed psychiatric hospital places.

There are confined cells for suicide prevention. There is a suicide approximately every five years. An officer told us she did not think there was any self-harm in the prison. Sex-specific health care information is not targeted at women. Abortion can be arranged in an external hospital and information is available. Female contraception is available.

The prison has no HIV reduction plan. There are information leaflets but there is no structured plan for disseminating information. Free condoms and bleach are available as has been said earlier in the report.

The outside world

Prisoners often tell employers they are on holiday when they go to prison; this is possible because of the short sentences. Two prisoners told us they had done this; one said it would probably be hard to get a job with a criminal record and she would have a gap in her employment record so she wanted to go back to her old job after her sentence. The prison may help prisoners engage with their employers and educational institutes. The prison will not lie for prisoners and encourages prisoners to be truthful with their colleagues, as 'people tend to understand if you are open about it otherwise they are suspicious'. However, only one person at an educational establishment needs to know that a student is serving a sentence and the prison will help with this.

Prisoners are given leave for external appointments. On the day of our visit, thirty-seven prisoners were out of the prison for various reasons. The prison will arrange the travel route. If prisoners are caught by the police where they should not be, there will be disciplinary sanctions, including transfer to a closed prison.

Home leave is granted every three weeks for prisoners to go out and see their family from Friday to Sunday. This is cleared beforehand with the police for prisoners convicted for assault, violence, manslaughter and drug trafficking. The staff member we spoke with said he had not come across any prisoners who did not take leave because they could not afford it. There are women who do not take leave. This is the prisoner's decision and the prison does not push visits. Social workers discuss family and domestic violence.

Visits are two hours, twice per week. The visiting rooms are next to the main reception area: small rooms leading off a corridor are equipped with a sofa bed, sink, mirror, chairs; condoms and towels are provided. As in Ringe prison (a closed prison in Denmark), no special arrangements need to be made for conjugal visits as all visits take place in private rooms. Rooms were not very cheerful but were quite spacious. There was a special visiting room for children with toys and this was carpeted (unlike the other rooms). There was also a small, fenced garden with table and chairs and a play house, seesaw and swings. Visitors are allowed

to bring food into the prison but drinks are forbidden as it is too easy to hide drugs in them. Prisoners are allowed to take food back to their rooms.

Other

We asked one officer the differences she found between male and female prisoners. She replied worries about children were much more obvious amongst women prisoners. She said women did talk to her about their problems.

Sexual relations are allowed between prisoners. When asked, an officer told us she would not know if a sexual relationship was exploitative but confirmed that women in the prison did prostitute themselves for drugs.

On pin boards in the units there were adverts for a stress management and prisoner rehabilitation evening and for the Thursday Film Club.

Prisoners have a free hairdressing session every eight weeks and can pay for appointments in between.

Other prisons

The main prison in Copenhagen has approximately thirty-six women prisoners. Approximately half the guards are women. It is an old building with small cells and long corridors. The cells do not have toilets; prisoners have to use a bucket at night. Prisoners are body searched after visits but visitors are not.²²

The prison called Vestre Faengsel, located to the west of Copenhagen, has a total capacity of 430. There were thirty-seven women in the women's unit in 1998. The prison is equipped with a gymnasium, a church, a library, a school and conference rooms for the prisoners. There is a penitentiary hospital with thirty-seven beds. Møgelkær State Prison has 126 places and receives female prisoners from counties west of the Great Belt. There is a thirty-place semi-open unit.

²² BBC, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3036450.stm>