The Icelandic Prison Service

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Where is Iceland?
Demographics

- 103,000 square km
- 320,000 people
  - 20,000 foreigners
  - 200,000 live in and around Reykjavík
- First language - Icelandic
- 69% of the population has a secondary education (2-4 years of college)
- 30% have a university degree
- 365,000 Icelandic kroner per month (2000 pounds)
Criminal System
Sentencing guidelines in Iceland

- Maximum sentence is life
- 16 years for murder/mannslaughter
- 12 years for drug trafficking
- 16 years for rape
- 12 years for child molestation!
- 6 years for burglary
And last but not least....
- 12 years for financial misdemeanours
The scope of the Prison and Probation Administration (PPA)

• To implement the sanctions/sentences that the courts hand down.
• This can mean those who are put on probation, community service, prison sentences, parole as well as in a very few instances those who are sentenced to therapeutic interventions e.g. drug treatment.
• To make sure that specialized services are made available to those who need it.
Staff members of the PPA

- General director
- 2 Social Workers
- 2 Community Service
- Lawyer
- 2 Psychologists
- 5 Office Personnel
- Criminologist
Prison population per 100,000 per capta in various countries around the world

Iceland: 44
Denmark: 63
Finland: 64
Norway: 69
Sweden: 74
Ireland: 76
Northern Ireland: 88
France: 89
Germany: 96
Scotland: 152
England/Wales: 153
Latvia: 234
Estonia: 259
Lithuania: 288
USA: 756
The waiting game – number of people waiting to come to prison

- 1989: 143
- 1990: 118
- 1991: 93
- 1992: 60
- 1993: 117
- 1994: 208
- 1995: 194
- 1996: 67
- 1997: 55
- 1998: 33
- 1999: 49
- 2000: 59
- 2001: 65
- 2002: 63
- 2003: 53
- 2004: 75
- 2005: 97
- 2006: 105
- 2007: 142
- 2008: 148
- 2009: 280
Average number of people serving a sentence each year, in prison (blue line) and thereof women (brown line) during the years 1988 - 2010.
Average number of persons in custody during the years 1996 - 2010 and thereof how many in solitary confinement, on average
Geirfinnsmálið
Solitary confinement
Gæsluværiðhald/einangrun
Average number of prisoners. Thereof in prison (blue line) thereof foreigners (redline).
Number of prisoners, on average in prison per day, and how many have been in prison before
Prisons in Iceland

- **Kópavogur**: 12 prisoners, 9 prison officers – mainly for women – closed prison
- **Litla-Hraun**: 87 prisoners – 50 prison officers – security prison
- **Hegningarhúsið**: Reykjavík – closed prison incoming prison - 16 prisoners, 12 prison officers
- **Akureyri**: 10 cells, revamped in 2006 in the police station, 6 prison officers – closed prison
- **Kvíabryggja**: Open prison, 20 prisoners, 8 prison officers
- **Bitra**: 16 prisoners – open prison

Total of 161 placements
Hegningarhúsi
Hegningarhús
Hegningarhúsinu
“the garden”
Kópavogur – womens prison
Kópavogur – the women’s prison
Kópavogur
Fangelsið Litla Hrauni
Litla Hraun
Visitors room
Toilet
Kvíabryggja – open prison
Fangelsið Kvíabryggju
Fangelsið Kvíabryggju
Fangelsið Akureyri
Fangelsið Akureyri
Fangelsið Akureyri
Sogn – Secure Unit
What do the psychologists do?
Psychologists in the Icelandic prison system

• First psychologist started in 1974 – part time
• Full-time from 1989
• Now two full-time positions within the service
  – One forensic – one clinical
• Our main objective is to decrease the likelihood of recidivism
What we officially do

- Counselling for prisoners
- Written reports to the PPA – mainly risk assessments/case management
- Teach at the prison academy
- Research
- Supervise staff
- Work with other mental health professionals
What we actually do

- One to one treatment – sexual/violent/young offenders
- Group therapy – Anger management, ADHD, Drug treatment
- Risk assessments and other if need be
- Supervision and treatment for those on parole, probation or community service
- Counselling for family members of prisoners
- Support for prison officers – peer support
- Supervision for prison officers
- Research
- Team work with other agencies e.g. secure unit, psychiatric ward, police, drug treatment centers and so on
How do we do it?

- Cognitive behaviour therapy
- Motivational interviewing
- Social skills NEED training
- ART – aggression replacement therapy
- Try to make it as interactive as possible especially the group work
- Trying to implement the risk, needs, responsivity principle (RNR)
- Use research to guide our efforts
The dynamic duo of forensic psychology in Iceland

- Dr. Gísli H. Guðjónsson
- Dr. Jón Friðrik Sigurðsson
Peer reviewed articles

Peer reviewed articles

Peer reviewed articles


Handrit samþykkt til birtingar:

Peer reviewed articles


What we know about our prisoners?

• All Jón and Gísli (and of course many others) research has helped us focus on certain issues within the prison population:
  – 52% of the prison population in Iceland have active symptoms of ADHD – thus we are now running a 15 week ADHD programme that is based on the RNR but been modified – results pending but promising

What do we know about our prisoners?

- We also know that a large percentage (33%) of prisoners have not finished their schooling and/or lack training.
  - There has been an emphasis on opening up educational opportunities for prisoners whilst in prison and our input has been to motivate them and help them find their strengths and how to use them.

- Now there are many more educational options for prisoners:
  - Secondary schooling
  - College
  - University (distance learning)

- Still lacking in vocational training but various jobs within the prison that teach them certain skills:
  - Gardening
  - Woodwork
  - Silversmith
  - Nuts and bolts

Arts and crafts
What do we know about our prisoners?

• Bullying was/is a problem within the prison system. By networking with other psychologists in the UK (Professor Jane Ireland) we were able to assess the extent of bullying within Icelandic prisons and do something about it.
  – We found out that there was more bullying going on than we had thought 57% as well as it being more hidden (52%). Some prisoners reported being sexually harassed which we did not anticipate (this has then gone on to be a major problem) – prison regulation made in regard to bullying behaviour in prisons but also all prison staff got training (by the psychologists) in how to spot/combat bullying behaviour
What do we know about our prisoners?

• From our research on ADHD we also found out that about 50% of our inmates had a substance abuse problem – used this information to secure funding for a drug treatment unit within Litla Hraun prison.
  – We now run a 3 month programme within the prison supported by the psychologists (supervision) and the AA as well as having two full-time staff members on the unit.

What do we know about our prisoners?

• From the 1990’s onwards prison staff found that prisoners behaviour became more challenging. To tackle the problem we introduced an group anger management programme.
  – According to our research both violent and non violent offender could benefit from anger management programmes but repeat offenders are top priority
Where are we heading?

• Prisoners are not mandated to treatment
• They do however want more psychological help
• We are not able to provide the services they want nor that the government want us to provide
  – Hire more psychologists
  – Train staff to “help” with some of the prisoners issues
Where are we heading?

- Would like to work within the Good Lives Model – were a small society and it fits well with us
- Need prison staff to take on more instructional roles
- However need to be aware of the pressures and the impact that working within prisons can put on staff - burnout and antisocial behaviours but thats for tomorrow....