

ICJR Seminar

‘Prisoner rehabilitation or prison destabilisation. You get what you pay for.’

Ralph Valerio, National Vice Chairman of the Prison Officers Association (POA)

3 December 2014 - 4:00pm
Building 85, Room 2209

Is our prison system in crisis or visionary rejuvenation?

Dependent upon who you speak to or what you read, the answer to that question can be wholly different. The criminal justice system is experiencing change at unprecedented scale and at unprecedented pace. History is indeed in the making. Prison overcrowding consistently blurs the lines of decency, prison officer shortages threaten risks to safety, closure of prisons bring efficiencies and the creation of ‘super prisons’ spark the human warehousing debate beyond the hypothetical. By contrast, the rehabilitation agenda has been given a kick start through the introduction of the ‘Through the Gate Services’ and ‘Payment by Results’. This seminar will seek to explore the validity to the argument that austerity drives innovation but from the viewpoint of a Prison Officer. Ralph Valerio poses the question “What will be the consequence for society from this rehabilitation revolution? and is the tax payer getting what they pay for?”



Ralph Valerio, POA

A graduate in Business and Management with specialism in Human Resource Management, it has often been said that as a Trade Union official, Ralph Valerio very much fulfils the role of gamekeeper turned poacher. A serving Prison Officer, Ralph contributes to the ever growing number of degree educated Prison Officers and has done so since 2000. During this time he has worked at HMP Swaleside and HMP Elmley where he has met and worked with all types of prisoner who have been categorised to live within the male prison estate. A great believer in fairness, honesty and decency, he has found the vocation of Prison Officer to be rewarding, sadly, as the years have passed, he has become increasingly frustrating by the shift in Governmental focus from encouraging pro-social modelling and rehabilitation to dangerous cost reduction culminating in less prison officers, less purposeful prison regime for prisoners and the inevitably ineffectual “human warehousing”. In 2010, he decided to transform that frustration into action and was elected to the National Executive Committee of the POA as one of the youngest ever nationally elected officials in the Trade Unions history. Since then, he has served the POA as an area official for the East of England, London and Kent and presently, the National Vice Chairman of the POA. Since taking up post in May 2013, Ralph has led all negotiations on behalf of the POA with the National Offender Management Services on their sweeping Prison Unit Cost Programme which is the single biggest change to our prison system in living history.