1. Background

Current Management of Violent and Disruptive Prisoner (VDP) Behaviour in the Irish Prison Service (IPS)

How do the IPS currently define VDP behaviour?

The IPS VDP policy defines violent and disruptive prisoner behaviour as that which:
(a) involves serious repetitive violence towards staff and/or other prisoners
(b) poses a significant risk of violence towards other
(c) poses particular operational issues for the prison system

How do the IPS currently manage VDP behaviour?

A small cohort of prisoners with behaviour meeting the above criteria (n = 5) are currently managed under the IPS VDP policy, first implemented in 2014.

These prisoners are managed separately from the general prison population in highly secure locations with restrictive regimes and minimal association with others.

A designated panel of Prison Officers are involved in managing these prisoners. These Officers are highly trained in Control & Restraint (C&R) procedures, and must use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), such as body armour and recording equipment, for all interactions with prisoners.

An estimated 15-25 prisoners in the IPS, at any one time, are engaged in serious, repetitive violent and disruptive behaviour. Those prisoners who are not managed under the VDP policy are managed similarly.

Future Management of VDP Behaviour in the IPS

The IPS are currently developing a designated unit for the assessment, management and treatment of VDP behaviour.

The unit is largely informed by existing models of care in the UK, particularly the Close Supervision Centre (CSC) System, but also Enabling Environments (EEs) and the Offender Personality Disorder (OPD) Pathway.

The unit will be small, with 4 assessment cells and 6 intervention cells, and located within the Midlands prison.

How will the new unit be different?

The new unit will differ from current management in the following key ways (Figure 1):

1. Psychologically Informed
   - Co-managed by operational and clinical leads
   - At senior and local level
2. Physical environment
   - Designed to look and feel therapeutic
   - Colours, furnishings, daylight, greenery
3. Staff training
   - To develop psychological knowledge and skill
   - Working with personality disorder, mental illness and violence risk
4. Staff supervision
   - Individual and group
   - Facilitated by Psychologist
5. Assessment
   - Violence risk
   - Personality
   - Cognitive
6. Intervention
   - Primarily individual, potentially group
   - CBT, DRT, MBT, Schema Therapy, Motivation & Engagement
7. Relational Security
   - Primary method of dealing with incidents
   - Plays a core role in the daily regime
   - Reinforced by positive staff behaviour
8. Goal-driven
   - Based on goals established in care & management plans
9. Services
   - Education, health-care and chaplaincy services
10. Facilities
    - Gym, library, multi-purpose room, horticulture

What does the unit aim to do?

Ultimately, the unit aims to progress prisoners along a risk management continuum (Figure 2):

1. Psychologically Informed
2. Relational Security
3. Goal-driven
4. Services
5. Facilities

Also, in line with the OPD pathway strategy, the unit aims to:
1. Reduce repeated serious violent and/or sexual offending
2. Improve psychological health, well-being, pre-social behaviour and relational outcomes
3. Improve competence, confidence and attitudes of staff working with complex offenders who are likely to have a severe personality disorder
4. Increase efficiency, cost effectiveness and quality of management

2. Aims

The IPS have funded a PhD student to conduct a research project, examining VDP behaviour in the IPS.

Through multiple studies, this project aims to:
1. Describe and compare the current and future management of VDP behaviour in the IPS
2. Develop an evidence-base to inform best practice and policy in the IPS, particularly the new unit

3. Design & Methodology

The project comprises of four studies (Table 1).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Source of Data</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Study 1</td>
<td>Examine current management of VDP behaviour in the IPS</td>
<td>Two groups of participants: 1. Prisoners engaged in VDP behaviour 2. Prison Officers managing prisoners in the unit</td>
<td>Mixed methodologies: 1. Qualitative component 2. Quantitative components</td>
<td>Thematic analysis of qualitative data</td>
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<tr>
<td>Study 2</td>
<td>Examine management of VDP behaviour in the new unit</td>
<td>Two groups of participants: 1. Prisoners managed in the unit 2. Prison Officers managing prisoners in the unit</td>
<td>Mixed methodologies: 1. Qualitative component 2. Quantitative components</td>
<td>Thematic analysis of qualitative data</td>
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<td>Study 3</td>
<td>Identify and compare factors related to incidents of VDP behaviour in the IPS, before and after the implementation of the new unit</td>
<td>Incident reporting data obtained from the IPS Prison Information Management System (PIMS)</td>
<td>Mixed methodologies: 1. Quantitative component 2. Qualitative component (e.g. written Officer reports)</td>
<td>Statistical analysis of quantitative data</td>
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<tr>
<td>Study 4</td>
<td>Systematically review a specific component of the relevant literature</td>
<td>Published literature identified from multiple relevant databases Unpublished literature obtained by contacting authors</td>
<td>Systematic review adhering to PRISMA guidelines</td>
<td>Content analysis of qualitative data</td>
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4. Results, Conclusions & Feedback

- The four studies will be conducted over a four-year period.
- As the research is being conducted in an applied and dynamic setting, the timeline of the project is flexible.
- However, the project begins with Study 1, which is influential in the development of the overall project, in various ways:
  - Study 1 generates essential baseline data, to be compared with the follow-up data of Study 2 to establish any change due to the implementation of the new unit.
  - Study 1 is exploratory, and its results will inform which variables are important for measurement in Study 2, and in the future as the unit continues to develop
  - Study 2 will be conducted when the unit is open for a sufficient amount of time to allow for accurate follow-up data to be collected.
  - Study 3 and Study 4, in utilising secondary data, are not time sensitive and will be continually conducted throughout the duration of the project.
- Taken together, these four studies contribute to an in-depth examination of VDP behaviour in the IPS.

5. References

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6. Acknowledgements

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