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# **SEEING IS BELIEVING: THE EFFECT OF PRISON-BASED INSIGHT-DAYS ON STUDENT NURSES' PERCEPTIONS OF UNDERTAKING PRACTICE PLACEMENTS WITHIN A PRISON HEALTHCARE ENVIRONMENT**

## **Abstract:**

Prisoners' access to healthcare should mirror that of the general public, but is adversely affected by challenges in recruiting nurses to work in custodial settings, potentially impacting on prisoner well-being. To address this issue prison-based insight-days have been developed jointly by one university and prison to positively influence students' views of undertaking placements in custodial settings because nurses are known to subsequently seek employment in areas where they have had positive student placements.

A phenomenological investigation explored student nurses' lived experiences of prison-based insight-days. Questionnaires and interviews were used to gather qualitative data about students' feelings both prior to and following the insight-day (n=17). All data was thematically analysed resulting in four themes: pre-placement curiosity, escalating admission anxiety, calming down inside and post-placement decision making.

The empirical findings showed that first-hand exposure to prisoners, and to the realities of a working prison, were crucial factors in dispelling stereotypes and addressing negative preconceptions of prison healthcare environments, as students could find prison placements unexpectedly appealing. Drawing on the findings, this paper recommends that facilitating prison insight-days within custodial settings, may be one way to encourage students to undertake prison placements.

## **Highlights:**

- Seeing prison environments for themselves improved students' insight.
- Meeting prisoners has the most impact of the day in dispelling stereotypes.
- Enhanced levels of safety and civility heightened the appeal of prison placements.

- The opportunities to achieve nursing skills/competencies in prison must be emphasised.
- Debriefing would help students to make sense of their prison insight experience.

**Key words:**

Nursing students; Prison health services; Learning environment; Clinical placement.

**Introduction**

Nurses often apply for employment in areas where they have had positive experiences as students (Tremayne and Hunt, 2019). However, it is globally recognised that particular challenges arise in recruiting healthcare staff into prison environments (Kent-Wilkinson, 2011) because of negative expectations which are often based on myths and stereotypes (Norman, 2017). Internationally, prisoners are recognised as having a range of complex health needs (Bouchard and Brooks, 2017) and if these needs are to be effectively managed prisoners should have the same access to, and quality of, healthcare as the general public (Merrifield, 2018). To achieve this goal, sufficient nurses need to be employed in prison healthcare settings. However, in the United Kingdom (UK) recruitment is currently particularly challenging as nursing is increasingly considered a risky, stressful job with increasing workplace assaults (Cowper, 2018) and 11.8% of all nursing posts in England are currently vacant (Campbell, 2018). There are, therefore, particular complications in encouraging student nurses to consider prison healthcare roles as both positive placements and employment opportunities.

Studies conducted in Turkey (Topcu and Kazan, 2018), Australia (van de Mortel et al., 2017) and the United States of America (Priano, 2017) suggest that universities have a role to play in drawing students' attention to prisoners' health care needs; particularly within custodial prisons as opposed to forensic nursing settings such as secure hospitals. National Health Service (NHS) England's (2019) long term plan supports this international agenda,

encouraging universities to diversify the range of placements available, including prison placements which offer unique experiences caring for marginalised groups (Brooker et al., 2018). This study reports on a collaboration by one university and prison healthcare unit to promote prison nursing to pre-registration student nurses through prison-based insight-days. The aim being to examine whether attending an insight-day within the prison environment impacted on students' perceptions of undertaking full prison placements, and their awareness of this potential career pathway.

## Background

Student nurses with no prior experience of prisons are often anxious about such placements, expressing particular concerns about how visually intimidating prisons appear (Bates, 2017); being locked in (King, 2010); being uncontactable (Bouchard and Brooks, 2017); risk of physical threats (Diaz et al., 2014); antisocial prisoner behaviour (Kent-Wilkinson, 2011); and fear of mentally ill offenders (Church et al., 2009). Students' concerns are intensified by society's disparaging views and negative responses from family and friends (Bates, 2017). Sensationalised media coverage further exacerbates negative misconceptions about prison security, contributing to students' anxiety (Ridley, 2014).

Pearce (2017, pp 39) notes that the best way to remedy healthcare workers preconceptions is to "*get them through the prison doors*", and Evans (1999) has long recommended that, to address negative attitudes, universities and prisons should develop more meaningful links. Evidence indicates that students feel more comfortable in prison settings when detailed prison inductions have been delivered at universities (van de Mortel et al., 2017; Bouchard and Brooks, 2017; Diaz et al., 2014). Several studies demonstrate that: enhancing students' understanding of security protocols reduces anxiety (Bouchard and Brooks, 2017); stereotypes are discarded when information about prisoners' legal and ethical rights are included in induction programmes (Brooker et al., 2018); and challenging students' prejudices enhances their responsiveness to prisoners (Gorman et al. 2018).

While global investigations indicate that pre-prison-placement inductions are seldom offered (Kent-Wilkinson, 2011), they also demonstrate that full prison placements have a positive impact on perceptions. Students report feeling more empowered and confident (Kent-Wilkinson, 2011), with increased empathy for marginalised groups, and enhanced insight into the challenges prisoners and their families face, resulting in a more positive attitude towards caring for prisoners (Filek et al., 2013). However, if the majority of students remain reluctant to take up full prison placements such impacts are likely to be nominal.

## Methods

### - Intervention

To address the challenges identified, prison-insight days have been jointly developed by one university and prison healthcare unit to promote the positive elements of prison nursing. Second year student nurses are offered the opportunity to volunteer for a one day experience within a prison environment, meeting prison staff and prisoners and seeing working healthcare and general prison facilities (Table 1). The purpose being to enable students to make a more informed decision about taking up a full placement. The overarching aim of the study was to examine whether attending a prison insight-day, within a prison environment, had an impact on student nurses' perceptions of undertaking a full practice placement within a prison healthcare environment.

### - Study design

The qualitative phenomenological approach (Husserl, 1913) chosen for the study was appropriate because it seeks to develop an understanding of a distinct 'lived experience' by participants. For the context of this study, the prison insight-day acts as the distinct lived experience. By focussing on participants meaning-making and perceptions of their lived experience both before, during and after it took place (Gallagher, 2012), there is an opportunity to better grasp the meanings they attached to it via their senses, feelings, thoughts, relationships and emotions (Zahavi, 2018). In turn enabling deeper insights into

the shared essence of the prison insight-day, by drawing attention to students' perspectives and self-constructions.

The study design provided the opportunity for students to consider their views and feelings prior to entering the prison and after completing the insight-day. The strict time limitations of an undergraduate study meant it was not possible to conduct both pre and post insight-day interviews and so a qualitative survey was designed to collect information prior to the event (Jansen, 2010). This questionnaire comprised six qualitative questions (Table 2) which were circulated both electronically and via paper and took approximately five to ten minutes to complete. Students were subsequently offered the opportunity to participate in twenty-minute, semi-structured interviews, comprising seven open-ended questions (Table 3), to consider their personal experience of the insight-day and reflect on their subsequent views and feelings.

#### **- Recruitment of participants**

The inclusion criteria for recruitment to the study were that students were second year mental health and adult field nurses, who had opted to attend one of the monthly prison insight-days offered at a local prison and had provided signed consent indicating their willingness to participate in surveys, interviews or both. Originally it was intended that participants would be recruited from attendees at May and June 2018 insight-days. This went to plan for the May insight-day. An electronic flyer was circulated and six students were recruited. However, the June insight-day was cancelled, and adjustments had to be made to recruitment. Five students from the June date had already completed pre-insight-day questionnaires and agreed that this data could be used. Six students who had undertaken taster days earlier in 2018, agreed to be interviewed (n=17) (Table 4).

#### **- Data Collection and Analysis**

Students were given the choice of completing the survey either electronically or on paper. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Field notes provided additional context.

Data from both surveys and interviews was thematically analysed using a three-stage process of phenomenological analysis (Quinlan, 2011) incorporating: stage one - reflexivity, stage two - horizontalization and stage three - structural and textural description (Moustakas, 1994). Firstly, the researcher reflected on and then set aside personal beliefs, views and assumptions. Secondly, significant sections of data which offered in-depth insights were clustered into units of meaning related to shared experiences and feelings. Thirdly, a thick description (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2012) was developed from the units of meaning, offering detailed insights into the meaning, structure and essence of student's shared lived-experience of the prison insight-day (Table 5).

#### - **Ethics**

Ethical approval was granted by the researcher's university. The ethical principles of the British Psychological Society (2018): respect, competence, responsibility and integrity, were adhered to throughout the study.

**Respect** encompassed maintaining participants' privacy and self-determination. An information sheet detailing the purpose of the study helped to inform students' decisions to participate and all participants signed a consent form before contributing to each phase of the study. Options to withdraw from the study and check-backs regarding accuracy of transcription also respected students' choices and control of their data. All data was stored securely, being password protected and /or locked away in a safe. Anonymity was built into the study by allocating each participant a random numerical code.

The researcher recognised her own level of **competence** by raising queries at supervision meetings and acting upon guidance.

**Responsibility** involved minimising the risk of harm to participants or others. A risk assessment was conducted and as a result a supportive resource was given to students indicating where further help and support could be obtained. All interviews were conducted

in small study rooms, on the university campus, to increase security and comply with lone-working guidelines (Suzy Lamplugh Trust, 2016)

**Integrity** required trustworthy and responsible research practices which were auditable through a reflective diary, field notes and the confirmation of two participants that the findings accurately represented their experiences.

## Findings

The overarching finding of the study, *Seeing is Believing*, revealed that physically seeing prison healthcare for themselves “*made it more real*” (930) for students, and was key in dispelling misconceptions and misplaced anxieties. The insight-day provided opportunities to make informed decisions about attending a prison placement based on a reality students had confirmed for themselves. The four super-ordinate themes (Table 3) which coalesced into the overarching theme are now presented.

### **Theme 1: Pre-placement Curiosity**

The first theme emerged from the data collected in the pre-insight-day survey and revealed that, despite feeling cautious, the insight-day piqued students’ curiosity about prison nursing.

Students acknowledged that prior to the insight-day they had negative preconceptions about prisons and prisoners which had been influenced by family, friends and the media:

*“people always talk about the negative connotations associated with it... and you think worst case scenario.”* (926).

Such presumptions led students to anticipate intensified risks, exacerbating their fear of “*the unknown*” (123) and generating heightened emotions; a few expected it to be “*exciting*” (510), but most felt “*scared*” (508) and “*daunted*” (912) about such a potential healthcare placement.

Nevertheless, the offer of an unknown and different type of placement had generated inquisitiveness and most students hoped that the insight-day would provide an opportunity to

gain a more accurate view of prison healthcare so they could make an informed decision about committing to a full placement.

Themes two, three and four emerged from the data gathered in the post insight-day interviews.

### ***Theme 2: Escalating Admission Anxiety***

The second theme offered explanations about why students' emotions built as they arrived and entered the prison.

Participants were unconcerned by security checks, characterising such safeguards as a normal part of everyday life:

*"They did extra security checks, but yeah it was fine. I felt like I was just walking into a building that had a famous person in it." (912)*

However, students found pat-downs physically intrusive and long waits to enter locked areas of the prison increasingly anxiety provoking:

*"Obviously the longer you wait, the more people tend to get anxious or a bit more nervous about it, so I think we were more apprehensive." (926).*

On entry students felt increasingly unnerved each time another door was locked behind them:

*"I did feel claustrophobic, they close all the doors, it's every single door you go in is closed behind you, I did think 'Oh my god! I can't get out of here.'" (520).*

The reality of being in a locked environment became tangible and anxiety escalated.

Students were also unnerved by prisoners' reactions to them as they walked through the prison grounds:

*"they're all shouting out of their windows...and we were all like oh my god!" (123).*

*"we got heckled...and it was the reality that you were in a working prison and it wasn't just something that you are just sitting in a classroom talking about it." (926)*

This first contact with prisoners confirmed their worst fears about working with prisoners and did little to allay their anxieties which peaked at this point.

### ***Theme 3: Calming Down Inside***

Theme three demonstrated the elements of the insight-day, within the prison environment, which helped to dispel myths and stereotypes and led to students gaining a more accurate view of working within a prison, which helped them to feel calmer.

As they walked through the prison, students began noting security measures which began to make them feel safer:

*“The more you looked around and spoke to people it became a lot more relaxed and comfortable and you knew that everything was in control...you know there’s alarms and cameras. It just put your mind at ease the more you looked around.”* (926).

They realised there were more measures in place to keep them secure in the prison than in other healthcare environments:

*“you’re actually safer nursing in a prison than you are Saturday night in A&E because you’ve got the guards all around you and all of that sort of stuff.”* (516).

Experiencing rigorous prison security began to de-escalate anxiety.

On arrival at the clinic students had a question and answer session with healthcare staff.

They particularly appreciated staff’s honest answers to their questions and felt they were provided with an un-sanitised view of prison working which provided an accurate insight:

*“it was a very realistic opinion...as opposed to trying to sugar coat it.”* (926).

The veracity of the information they were given by staff was further reinforced when they were shown a prison cell:

*“you got told [cells were] small but until you actually saw them you didn’t realise how small... that was a bit shocking.”* (926).

Seeing for themselves further convinced students that what they were being told was the reality of a working prison:

*“until you go there, and you see it, you get a much better idea.”* (516).

This authentic viewing of a prison convinced students that their preconceptions were unfounded, further reassuring and calming them.

The highlight of the day was the opportunity to talk to a prisoner; most participants were surprised at this person’s normal appearance:

*“we were like ‘is this actually a prisoner?’”* (912).

Students were also surprised by the prisoner’s intelligence:

*“you could tell [X] was a very intelligent [person].”* (926).

To some it was incomprehensible that *“someone you could pass in the street”* (926) could have committed a serious crime. Students noted a significant change in their perceptions and opinions of prisoners; many began to feel sympathy with the realisation that prisoners were people with life-stories:

*“it changed my mind, [their] story was sad, you kept having to rethink in your head ‘[they’re] in here for a reason.’ I think a lot of people’s opinion would change, especially if they got the prisoner we got. I think quite a lot of people would have let [them] out there and then if they could have.”* (508).

This humanisation broke down negative stereotypes of prisoners which some students did not realise they had been harbouring until this point.

Much of what the students saw was unexpected:

*“it’s just completely different to what I thought.”* (508).

The environment was more controlled and individual prisoners more well-mannered than expected. Dispelling their previous beliefs helped students to feel more at ease. Seeing for themselves helped students to develop realistic expectations of working in a prison and to *“feel more comfortable”* because they knew *“what to expect”* (926).

Students noted that when commencing a full prison placement they would now just experience the usual level of uncertainty experienced at the start of any new placement:

*“I feel like now I’d be a lot more easy-going because I know. Obviously when you go to any new placement anyway it’s like a new setting, and now I feel more comfortable because I know what to expect a bit more. On your first day [of any placement] you’re like, I don’t really know anything but I’m here and that’s like the worst.” (926)*

By this point students reported feeling calmer because the insight-day had normalised prison placements into something more akin to their previous practical experiences.

#### ***Theme 4: Post-placement Decision Making***

The fourth theme demonstrated the features that students had contemplated after the insight-day and how each element impacted on their subsequent perception of prison healthcare working. Participating in this research study was the first structured opportunity students had had to consider how the experience had affected their perceptions as they noted that:

*“at the end of the day we just went away” (930).*

Nevertheless, all students had clearly reflected on the impact the day had had upon them.

Students who had attended the insight-day with a view to asking for a full prison placement felt they had seen enough to make an informed decision and were subsequently even more interested in taking up the offer:

*“I’d like one even more now.” (516).*

Other students who did not want the placement before they had been shown prison healthcare had now reconsidered, being surprised by how much they now wanted to go back:

*“it was just surprising how much I actually enjoyed it because I really wasn’t expecting to. I think I’d be a bit sceptical if I’d just got it without the [insight-day] but I think it has made me more confident in going and wanting to actually go.” (930)*

One key factor in students’ decisions to take up a placement appeared to be feeling that they had seen enough elements of unfiltered prison healthcare to make an informed decision.

Student also appraised if they would be a good fit with this placement. Some were embarrassed that eating lunch with prison staff was important to them because it had emphasised the opportunities to take breaks which demonstrated a more controlled structure to the working day:

*“I know this sounds stupid but they had a proper lunchbreak whereas you don’t get that in a hospital. There’s an hour where the prisoners are with the prison officers and they have a proper hour and I just really enjoyed it” (930).*

Students were concerned about whether there would be sufficient opportunities to master the skills and competencies in their practical assessment documents, as lack of opportunities would negatively affect their course progress:

*“we wouldn’t be able to get our skills signed off...we’d end up behind.” (123).*

Students particularly sought reassurance about this issue and it was considered *“a deal breaker”* (126).

The insight-day revealed prison healthcare as a possible employment opportunity to students who had not previously been aware that nurses worked in prisons:

*“I would never have considered working there before, but I think it’s good, and just how safe I felt it was to be honest because I was apprehensive about it and afterwards I was surprised.” (123).*

Insight-days had also reinforced the attractions to those with previous experience:

*“finding out even more, working there just appeals to me even more.” (516).*

Most students felt the day had provided good insight and were more comfortable with the idea of working within prisons both as students and registrants.

### ***Overarching Theme: Seeing is Believing***

Students felt more able to appraise their suitability to working within a prison environment, once they had seen for themselves as they felt they had authentic information on which to base their decision:

*“it’s not all imagination then; you’ve seen it there in black and white and it’s nice to have that image as opposed to the one you can think of when you’re just driving there in the car, before you’ve actually seen it.” (926).*

The possible reasons why the majority of students found this working environment unexpectedly appealing will now be explored.

## Discussion

This study reveals the principal reason student nurses are often anxious about working within prison environments is concern for their personal safety because prison is perceived as a risky, uncontrolled environment. Other logistical considerations such as working conditions and opportunities to achieve skills and competencies are also key concerns. Students took the same elements into consideration when evaluating prison healthcare as either a placement or an employment opportunity.

### Personal Safety

Personal safety was students’ overriding concern, this finding corresponds with the findings of other studies (Kent-Wilkinson, 2011; van de Mortel et al, 2017). Levels of violence against NHS staff are high; a third have been the subject of violent behaviour within the last year and almost every accident unit nurse reports being the victim of violence (Solheim, 2018).

Students may have witnessed, or been the subject of, violence on previous placements. Such experiences could lead them to anticipate being even less safe in prison. However, a recent report by the Public Service Trade Union (UNISON) (Cowper, 2018) has demonstrated that, in the course of their work, prison officers and police officers are less likely to be assaulted than nurses. Thus, students’ observations, that they would be safer working in the prison than in the local emergency department, were probably accurate and are supported by local examples (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2018). This finding indicates that the students’ concerns about being shown a sanitised version of prison life may have been unfounded. The call by the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) Congress

(Merrifield, 2018) to take action to reduce the negative myths and stereotypes which affect nurses' willingness to work in prisons is borne-out by this study.

The challenge of the insight-day was to manage students' apprehension, but their anxiety built as they arrived and waited to enter the prison, an issue also noted by Bates (2017). Shorter waits seemed to mitigate anxiety, and some consideration needs to be given to how manage such delays. However, it was not until after they had entered the prison that students reported beginning to feel calmer, which supports the view of one NHS Trust Head of Service Operations for Prisons who notes that the challenge is "*getting nurses through the prison doors*" and that once inside their preconceptions of working within a prison begin to change (Pearce, 2017 pp 39). Two key elements then became apparent which reduced concerns.

Firstly, students were reassured by the security measures in place. Bouchard and Brooks' (2017) agree that students should be made aware of security procedures during orientation programmes. However, the purpose should be just as much to reassure students as to gain their compliance.

Secondly, meeting a prisoner had the most marked impact of the day. Students were reluctant to say what they had been expecting, probably because nurses are taught to be none-judgemental (Nursing and Midwifery Council, 2018). However, many expressed surprise that the prisoner was well presented, polite, intelligent and articulate. The initial experience of prisoners calling from windows, which had initially frightened them, was now reinterpreted as '*mainly banter*' (926) as they discovered that most prisoners were respectful of nurses. They acknowledged that they had arrived with stereotypical views about prisoners and how quickly these had been broken down by meeting a prisoner.

Students recognised that discussion with a prisoner built understanding and compassion, which concurs with Filek and colleagues' (2013) findings. They began to recognise the essential care needs of prisoners and to appreciate the impact they could have by choosing

to work here. Brooker et al. (2018) agree, reporting that most healthcare staff elect to work in prisons because they are concerned about social justice for a marginalised population.

Seeing for themselves that they would be working in a safer environment, with politer patients, compared to their experiences in the NHS, made the prison both an unexpectedly appealing placement and employment choice. These elements could not be simulated for students if they were inducted off-site and are key to the positive impression most students gained from the prison insight-day. Hence, going into the prison itself had strong positive workforce recruitment benefits.

### **Achieving Competencies and Skills**

Some concerns were, however, raised about the impact undertaking a full prison placement would have on achievement of the learning outcomes and skills in students' practical assessment documents. Practical assessment documents can impede, rather than enhance, individual's development in placements because students strategically collect competencies and skills rather than focussing on the wider learning opportunities on offer (Hunt et al., 2016). Given that other studies have identified a range of transferable nursing skills are available in prisons (van de Mortel et al., 2017) students' concerns were an unexpected finding of this study. However, the reason may be that students had not seen clinics working and so had not witnessed the skills being practiced which, again, emphasises the impact that seeing first-hand had. Therefore, reinforcing how students can achieve the outcomes and skills in their practice documents, in this environment, is important to convince them that they will not fall behind.

### **Working Conditions**

Students were impressed that prison nurses got to take their breaks, a point reinforced by sharing lunch with staff. Students were slightly embarrassed that breaks were important to them, but the RCN (2018b) has noted that lack of breaks and working beyond the end of a shift in the NHS is causing significant stress for healthcare workers. Brooker et al. (2018)

have also shown that medical students were aware of the more controlled working environment in which taking breaks was routine. Thus, even though sharing lunch may have seemed a nice extra touch, it gave a strong positive message to students about prison working conditions.

### **Debriefing**

As anticipated, participating in this study gave students the opportunity to reflect on the prison insight-day; offering an occasion to scrutinise their own responses, as no debriefing had previously taken place (Field note 1). Debriefing is a vital part of any experiential learning event as it helps students make sense of what they have seen (Shinners et al, 2016). It encourages relevant, timely exploration of issues in a non-threatening and non-judgemental environment (RCN, 2018c) and is a powerful way to explore unexpected perspectives and confront intuitive beliefs (Kolb, 1984). Debriefing would have been particularly helpful to students following the insight-day in supporting them to evaluate and integrate the lessons learnt into their subsequent view of prison healthcare (Gardner, 2013). Debriefing of prison healthcare employees is undertaken routinely for the same reasons (RCN, 2018c). It is recommended that an operational debrief is incorporated into prison insight-days.

### **Seeing is Believing**

The key finding of this study was that gaining first-hand experience had significant impact on students' awareness of prison healthcare as both a placement and a career pathway. This finding corresponds with Ridley's (2014) study of criminology students' which showed there was no substitute for experiencing the reality of prisons. Student nurses noted how convincing seeing for themselves was as a strategy, both for raising the profile of prison healthcare to those who has been unaware of this opportunity, and for changing views about the working environment of a prison. Three pieces of seminal psychological and educational theory offer an explanation for this change. Dale's (1969) cone of experience shows direct

purposeful experience is the most effective learning method and Kolb's (1984) theory of experiential learning demonstrates that the key starting point to effective learning is to observe and function in an immediate and relevant setting. Fazio and Zanna (1981) have noted that the most effective strategy for changing attitudes is direct personal experience. Together these theories offer a plausible explanation of why taking students into the prison setting itself for the insight-day was a powerful and effective strategy which challenged and positively changed their perceptions of undertaking a practical placement and subsequently working in a prison setting.

## Recommendations

The key recommendation of this study is to continue delivering insight-days within the prison setting as it encourages students to take-up practical placements caring for a marginalised community. Exposure to prison healthcare appears to have positive implications for prison healthcare recruitment and in the long run prisoner welfare.

Consideration needs to be given to how students' anxiety can be minimised prior to entry to the prison. However, once inside, most students' observations were favourable and it is recommended that these should be emphasised both during the day itself and to other prospective students. The effect of seeing strong security measures and meeting a prisoner are the most important elements to include since they had the most impact in dispelling negative stereotypes.

Stronger demonstration is needed of how students can achieve their practical learning outcomes and skills during a prison placement as this concern was identified as the biggest barrier. Sharing lunch with staff should be retained; it gives a strong, clear message that here nurses take breaks, demonstrating how regulated and controlled the working environment is compared to other sectors. Debriefing of students at the end of the day should take place to help make sense of their experience.

Further research is recommended into students' experiences of full prison placements following insight-days and into the impact on future recruitment of prison nurses. Table 6 provides a full list of recommendations.

## Limitations

It is acknowledged that this study only presents the views of student nurses and the perceptions of those who delivered the insight-days are not represented here. Since no male nurses volunteered to participate, the study only represents female perspectives. Wider claims outside the group who participated in the study are not made, but it is worth noting the strong resonance these findings have had with prison nurses across the UK, indicating that the findings may have some transferability. Finally, the principal authors acknowledge that their background is in criminology, not nursing, which may have some bearing on the interpretation of data provided by participants.

## Conclusion

Situating the insight-day within the prison environment had a strong impact on students, providing them with opportunities to confront and modify negative preconceptions and stereotypes about both prisons and prisoners and to compare this environment with previous placements. Prison insight-days are a sound step in meeting the RCN's call to reduce the negative myths which affect nurses' willingness to work in prisons. They support Pearce's (2017, pp 39) opinion that "*getting nurses through the prison doors*", to see for themselves, positively changes their views and clearly demonstrates that prison insight-days had a positive impact on student nurses' perceptions of undertaking a full prison healthcare placement.

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## Tables

**Table 1: Activities and Facilities Seen by Students**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Facilities</b>
Security checks	Clinics
Escorted walk through prison	Opticians
Tour of healthcare facilities	Dentist
Presentation about prison nursing	Pharmacy
Q&A with healthcare staff	Medicine dispensing
Q&A with prisoner	The gym
	The offices
	Prison wing
	Prisoner's cell

**Table 2: Pre Insight-day Qualitative Questionnaire**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Question</b>
1.	Why have you chosen to do the insight-day?
2.	What are you hoping the prison insight-day will give you?
3.	How do you feel about the idea of working inside a prison?
4.	How do you feel about caring for people who have committed crimes?
5.	What do you think the main healthcare needs of prisoners will be?
6.	Is there anything else you would like to add?

**Table 3: Post Insight-day Qualitative Interview Questions**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Question</b>
1.	Can you tell me about your experience of the prison insight-day?
2.	What was the experience of being inside a prison like?
3.	What stood out for you about the day?
4.	Would you have liked anything else to be included in the insight-day?
5.	How would you feel about having a prison placement now you've done the insight-day?
6.	How do you now feel about prison nursing as a potential employment opportunity?
7.	Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?

**Table 4: Sample Details**

	<b>Field of Nursing</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Completed Questionnaire</b>	<b>Interviewed</b>
	<b>3</b> Mental Health	<b>17</b> Female	<b>6</b> from May insight-day	<b>4</b> from May insight-day
	<b>14</b> Adult	<b>0</b> Male	<b>5</b> from June insight-day	<b>6</b> from April insight-day
<b>Totals</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>

Table 5: Hierarchy of Themes

OVER-ARCHING THEME	<b>Seeing is Believing</b>			
SUPER-ORDINATE THEMES	Pre-placement Curiosity	Escalating Admission Anxiety	Calming Down Inside	Post-placement Decision Making
MAJOR THEMES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognising Own Preconceptions</li> <li>• Heightened Emotions</li> <li>• Wanting Insight</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undergoing Security Checks</li> <li>• Being Locked In</li> <li>• Unexpected Prisoner Behaviours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling Safe</li> <li>• Gaining Insight</li> <li>• Humanising Prisoners</li> <li>• Normalising the Experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeing enough to decide</li> <li>• Evaluating if you are a good fit</li> <li>• Unexpectedly appealing</li> </ul>

**Table 6: Summary of Recommendations**

**Recommendations – University**

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- Maintain prison insight-days and build links with further prison healthcare providers.
  - Include information about healthcare in prison and forensic settings within the curriculum – particularly for adult nurses.
  - Provide initial student briefing, particularly focussing on personal safety and security, prior to entering a prison to reduce anxiety.
  - Inform students about the opportunities available within the prison healthcare setting to achieve the skills and competencies within their practical assessment documents.
  - Ensure students are debriefed, providing students with the opportunity to explore and process their feelings, develop a deeper appreciation of the experience and to make sense of it.
  - Find ways for students to share their positive experiences of the prison healthcare setting with their peers, for example during the pre-placement briefing.
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- Keep waiting times directly before entering the prison to a minimum.
  - Offer all students the opportunity to talk to a prisoner.
  - Allow students to see the prison healthcare facilities working and emphasise the range of skills and competencies which can be achieved.
  - Continue to share lunch with staff, as part of the experience to demonstrate a controlled working environment in which taking breaks is routine.
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- Examination of students' views following a full prison placement.
- Quantitative study examining impact of insight-days and prison experiences on prison nursing recruitment numbers.