Research aims
Account for the significance of sound in prison, with a particular focus on these research questions:
• What meaning and effects does sound have on those who live and work in prison?
• How does this impact on the wellbeing and adaptation of those in prison?
• How do sound & noise feature in relationships between prisoners and staff?
• How does this relate to issues of aggression and violence?

This project provides a means of exploring prison society in a different way, adding texture to understanding how prison spaces are experienced by those who live and work within them.

Sound and noise in prison
Noise features heavily in prison “banging doors…keys jangling, shouting and screaming” (Owens 2012). Exposure to noise is linked to a host of health issues, while sound sensitivity is associated with a wide range of conditions – depression, psychosis, autism, learning disabilities, PTSD – prevalent in the prison population (PRT 2016). Sound threatens wellbeing and processes of adaptation for prisoners and staff (Herrity 2015).

Excessive noise disrupts worship, education, sleep intruding on privacy and peace. In a pilot study sound was identified as a powerful signifier of disorder, while ‘quiet’ had a multiplicity of meanings relating to the complex business of order maintenance – to say the word was viewed as inviting incident.

What is it like to live and work whilst banged up in the clink?


For more information about this research please contact Kate on kzh1@le.ac.uk.

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