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Reeves, Carla

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Sex Offender Grouping with a Probation Approved Premises

This presentation explores how convicted or charged sexual offenders within a Probation Approved Premises (probation hostel) experience life within the hostel in terms of group structures.

The presentation considers the findings of an ethnographic case study of a probation hostel which drew upon the work of Sykes and Matza, Goffman and Foucault. The hostel accommodated medium-high and high risk offenders, and was mixed in terms of the offences that residents had committed and also by gender. The fieldwork was conducted over two years, within which time participant observation and in-depth interviewing was undertaken; paying attention to the social interactions of staff and residents of the hostel.

There is little prior research undertaken on the practice of hostels, the experiences of offenders in hostels or work undertaken with sex offenders within hostels. The findings of this study are intended to address this neglect. Key findings presented include the manner in which sex offenders group together in the hostel, the function and use of the group by members and non-members. The sex offender group structure is placed in the context of other resident and staff grouping, and the extent to which sex offenders are regarded as 'other' within the hostel. This presentation includes a consideration of how grouping can affect the work of hostel staff aimed towards reintegration and rehabilitation.