

Exploration of older prisoner's social needs, who attended one of two prison initiatives for older people: An inductive phenomenological study.

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of this study was to explore the social needs and experiences of older prisoners who were attending one of two social initiatives in a prison in England.

Methodology: An interpretative phenomenological study, conducted in a prison in the South West of England. Older prisoners attending an initiative implemented for those over 55, a purposive activity or a social task group, participated in a focus group, which were audio recorded and thematically analysed.

Findings: Two overarching themes were identified. Firstly, the need to feel safe, prisoners felt attending an initiative provided them with a safe haven away from noisy and boisterous younger prisoners, who they perceived as different from them and received preferential treatment. Secondly, being provided with a purpose, prisoners felt they belonged amongst their peers, which motivated them to attend and support group activities.

Research limitations/implications: This study was completed in one prison, however both initiatives supported the social needs of older prisoners and enabled them to leave their cells, although they felt unsafe when not attending an initiative.

Originality/value: The need remains to support the process of integrating younger and older prisoners, with the provision of both integrated and separate initiatives, with the aim of developing cross-generational bi-direction peer support.

Introduction

Prison populations around the world are aging. In Australia, the proportion of the prison population over the age of 50 rose from 8.3% in 2000 to 12.9% in 2017 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2000; 2017). Similarly, in the United States of America (US) the proportion of the prison population over the age of 55 has risen from 3% to 10% between 1993 and 2013 (Carson and Sabol, 2016). Whilst, in England and Wales there were 13,522 prisoners over the age of 50 in 2019, which accounts for 17% of the prison population (HM Prison and Probation Service, 2018). The changing demographics of prison populations, with increasing numbers of older prisoners, is expected to continue.

Many factors have contributed to the increase in older prisoners. Firstly, global aging, the World Health Organisation (2011) estimated the number of people over the age of 65 will increase from 524 million in 2010 to 1.5 billion in 2050. Secondly, changes to law, including the implementation of: custodial sentences to discourage crime, mandatory minimum sentences, and long sentences (Baidawi *et al.*, 2011; Moll, 2013). In the UK, custodial sentences for breaches of bail have also been implemented (Ministry of Justice, 2010). Finally, the increase in older prisoners has occurred due to advances in forensic evidence to support the prosecution of historic sex offences (Ginn, 2012).

The negative impact of prison on prisoner's physical health has been widely acknowledged since the turn of the century. Grant (1999) identified a 10-year differential in a prisoner's chronological age and physiological health. Therefore, older prisoners are significantly more likely to have physical and mental health problems, which require medical and psychological treatment (Omolade, 2014). In the UK and US older prisoners have high rates of diabetes mellitus, liver disease, cardiovascular and respiratory conditions, depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation and suicide (Hayes *et al.*, 2012; Sharupski *et al.*, 2018; Noonan, 2015).

An important element to support the physical and mental health of older prisoners is to understand and address their social needs (Milner *et al.*, 2016; Brinker and Cheruvu, 2017). Maslow (1970) identified social needs as the need to be loved, accepted and belong, by friends and family members, within romantic relationships, and social and community groups. The impact of addressing social needs on individual's physical and mental health includes an increase in physical activity, improved self-care of long term conditions and protection against stress and anxiety (Smith *et al.*, 2017; Le Blanc *et al.* 2018; Gronning *et al.*, 2018).

Social needs of older prisoners have begun to be recognised, however, other elements also need to be considered, such as the practical element of prison environments, which can negatively impact upon the mobility of older prisoners and their ability to attend initiatives (HM Inspectorate of Prison and Care Quality Commission, 2018; Justice of Custodial Services, 2015). Interactions with other prisoners also needs further consideration, as older prisoners have been victimised and bullied by younger prisoners (Fazel *et al.*, 2016). These elements are compounded by both the lack of training and knowledge of prison staff on how to support older prisoners (Brooke and Rybacka, 2020). The combination of these factors can have a detrimental impact on the social needs of older prisoners, leaving them prone to loneliness, isolation, anxiety and depression (Baidawi *et al.*, 2016).

Therefore, the complex needs of older prisoners require specific commissioning, initiatives and pathways. In England and Wales, a national strategy to support the unique needs of this population has yet to be developed. Therefore, it is unsurprising that older prisoners have reported a lack of daytime activities (O'Hara *et al.*, 2016), and being locked in their cells for long periods of time (HM Inspectorate of Prisons Quality Care Commission, 2018). Similar findings were identified by the Justice of Custodial Services, in New South Wales (2015).

Social interventions for older prisoners have been implemented in prisons, in Belgium, England, Japan and the US (Moll, 2013). These initiatives include day centres, which vary significantly, although offer less arduous work, and include activities that range from packing food bags for breakfast, to board games, puzzles, arts and crafts, screening of films, access to outside space and visits from external speakers. An example of a comprehensive initiative is True Grit, which provides various recreational and physical activities, group and individual therapy, and spiritual discussions with support from aging services, prison chaplains and volunteers (Harrison, 2006; Kopera-Frye *et al.*, 2013).

Currently, there is a lack of robust evaluations of initiatives implemented specifically for older prisoners. The majority of evaluations include anecdotal information from prison staff, and how they believe an initiative has impacted on older prisoners (Moll, 2013). This approach does not consider the perspectives of older prisoners' and how they identify and define their social needs whilst in prison. Therefore, there remains a need to understand how older prisoners' identify and define their social needs, and how this is influenced by attending an initiative implemented specifically for older prisoners.

Aim

The aim of this study was to explore and understand the social needs and experiences of older prisoners who were attending one of two initiatives for prisoners over the age of 55.

Methods

Design

The design of this study was informed by inductive phenomenology (Groenewald, 2004), and influenced by the philosophical approach of Heidegger (1962). Both theoretical approaches support the exploration of the lived experience of older prisoners through understanding their

world of objects, relations and language, related to the prison setting and facilitate an understanding of how older prisoners interpret and make meaning of this environment. Qualitative data was collected through focus group methodology, until data saturation was reached (Faulkner and Trotter, 2017), the above theoretical approaches were adhered to whilst applying the process of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Data collection

Focus groups were carefully planned to explore older prisoner's social needs. Focus group discussions enable small groups of participants to share and discuss their individual experiences, whilst influencing, and being influenced, by their peers, as they would in a prison setting (Hollander, 2004). Focus groups also facilitate the collection of a wide range of experiences from a small sample (Krueger and Casey, 2009). Each focus group was guided by a semi-structured questionnaire, which was developed from existing literature. Open ended questions included: 'Why do you attend this group?', 'How does this group support you?' and 'What other support do you need as an older prisoner?' Each open-ended question had a number of prompt questions to further explore each topic in depth.

Setting

The study was completed in a male prison, with the capacity to hold 640 prisoners, in the South West of England, within Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). This prison was built in the nineteenth century and was chosen as it integrates prisoners convicted of sexual offences with the general prison population. The prison, therefore, houses a high proportion of older prisoners. The level of security for this prison was a category c, which is a closed prison, for prisoners who cannot be trusted in open conditions but are unlikely to try and escape.

Initiatives for older prisoners

The prison had implemented two initiatives to support prisoners over the age of 55; for the purposes of this study they are called the Social Task Group and the Purposive Activity Group.

Social Task Group (STG)– this initiative was staffed by prison officers and occurred during normal working hours five days a week. A designated space for this initiative included ten cells, where different activities occurred, including arts and crafts, such as painting bird houses, alongside more practical activities such as repairing wheelchairs, or packing breakfast bags. All activities were prisoner led, and all prisoners were able to complete these activities independently. Approximately 30 prisoners attended each session. The designated space also included a large common room, which supported older prisoners to meet and socialise with tea and toast, screened films and hosted talks from external visitors. There was also permanent access to an outside space, although this was a concrete yard.

Purposive Activity Group (PAG) – this initiative was staffed by a member of the education team and delivered four days a week on the ground floor of a wing designated for older prisoners with mobility difficulties. This initiative involved arts and crafts with problem-solving elements, as well a pop-quizzes and discussions. On one afternoon a week, activities including games such as skittles, were held in the gym to encourage physical activity. The older prisoners within this group required one-to-one or small group supervision to be supported through these activities, therefore this group was attended by six to ten prisoners.

Ethics

Ethical considerations of completing research in the closed prison environment informed the protocol for this study. Focus groups were planned to be conducted within the provision of

two initiatives implemented for older prisoners. This approach supports prisoner participation without the specific knowledge of prison staff or other prisoners outside of these initiatives.

The study obtained ethical approval from all relevant ethic committees, including Oxford Brookes University Research Ethics Committee, who were the sponsors, the Health Research Authority, and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), formerly the National Offender Management Service (NOMS).

Participants

Potential participants, those attending one of two initiatives implemented for specifically for older prisoners, received a participant information sheet, and had time to discuss the study with each other and the researchers, prior to providing informed consent. All potential participants were informed that certain information, regarding prison security, illegal behaviour or risk to self, fellow prisoners or prison staff would be disclosed and discussed with appropriate authorities. Lastly, all participants were informed of the anonymous and voluntary nature of participating and the ability to withdraw at any time, without any reason.

Procedure

All focus groups were facilitated in private 'cells' within the two initiatives. The first author facilitated all focus groups (n=4) with a total of 12 participants, which were held between October and November 2017 (refer to Table 1 for an overview).

Table 1: Overview of the structure of focus groups and interviews

Focus groups	Date	Number of participants	Age (Mean age)	Prison initiative
1	06/12/2017	3	61, 63, 65 (63)	Social Task Group Bill, Tom and Jack*
2	06/12/2017	3	59, 61, 75 (65)	Social Task Group Eric, Tony, Dave*
3	07/12/2017	3	71, 72, 74 (72)	Purposive Activity Group Arthur, Charlie, Eddie*
4	07/12/2017	3	62, 73, 74 (69)	Purposive Activity Group Albert, Fred, Percy*

Total number of participants: 12

*All names are synonyms

Analysis

On completion, each focus group was transcribed verbatim and inductive thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006) was undertaken. The six phases of thematic analysis commenced with familiarisation of the data, through reading and re-reading of the transcripts. Secondly, the generation of initial codes occurred at both the semantic and latent level to remain both close to the data and interpret the data. Thirdly, the active process of searching for themes was completed to identify important elements and patterns. Fourthly, the potential themes were reviewed to explore the quality, to ensure sufficient meaningful, themes were supported by the data. The last two phases included the final defining and naming of the themes and the development of reporting each theme (Braun and Clarke,

2012). Both authors completed this reflexive and iterative process, disagreements were agreed by returning to the original manuscripts (Clarke and Braun, 2013).

Results

The participants from the PAG were older and more physically impaired than those attending the STG. The mean age of PAG was 71, compared to the mean age of STG, which was 64.

The need for mobility support, ranging from wheelchair to walking stick, was prevalent in five out of six older prisoners attending PAG, compared to none who were attending STG.

Two overarching themes were identified, firstly, the need to feel safe; prisoners felt attending these initiatives provided them with a safe haven away from boisterous younger prisoners, who were perceived as different and received preferential treatment. Secondly, the need to have a purpose; prisoners felt they belonged to a group, which motivated them to complete activities.

The need to feel safe

This theme emerged through older prisoner's discussion of their underlying social need to feel safe, which they believed was not possible around younger prisoners. The attendance of one of either initiatives supported older prisoners to temporarily remove themselves and escape this perceived unsafe environment. Older prisoners highlighted negative differences between them and younger prisoners, which are identified in the subthemes; 'they are druggies and bullies', and 'they are always in a hurry and boisterous'.

They are druggies, and bullies

Older prisoners felt unsafe in prison because they believed younger prisoners were all involved in illegal drugs, especially 'spice'. Due to this belief, older prisoners also believed that younger prisoners received preferential treatment from both the prison staff and prison

system. These perceived differences impacted negatively on older prisoners, who wanted a 'quiet life' in prison. Tom expressed these beliefs and also implied people who took drugs were not normal:

“The prison needs separating, the younger ones, the drug takers away from ... I nearly said normal people, but that is not what I meant, I meant people of our age, we just want to come in and have a quiet life, read, and feel safe walking about the prison.”

An ongoing concern for many of the older prisoners was the ability to collect their prescribed medication in safety. Older prisoners felt bullied and intimidated by younger prisoners, who they believed would forcibly take their medication. Dave and Tony, who collected their medication daily, discussed how it could be frightening to complete this routine task:

“I just want to feel safe, but sometimes when you go to get your medication you are definitely not.” *Dave*. “Yep, I get daily medications, if you get stuck in that queue it can be frightening, intimidating, it is not nice at all, it is like you have to fight to keep your meds.” *Tony*

The concept of having to 'fight to keep your meds' was discussed and a belief that prison officers ignored this behaviour, which allowed younger prisoners to behave this way, emerged. Bill discussed his experiences of collecting his medication:

“It is why can't you guys (younger prisoners) pack it in, it is almost like you have to fight your way through, sometime the officer there doesn't really control it and just stands there and is like 'oh that is not really happening' and it starts a bit of aggravation.”

However, attending the Social Task Group addressed this issue, as older prisoners attending this initiative could collect their medications prior to the general movement of the prison.

They are always in a hurry and boisterous

Older prisoner's belief of feeling unsafe, was further explored through the need to avoid younger prisoners, who were always in a hurry, running all the time, being boisterous and causing aggravation. Older prisoners constantly worried they would not be able to move quickly enough to avoid being knocked into, or from getting caught in a fight, which left them feeling unsafe and vulnerable. Dave observed 'I don't do quick', whilst Eric and Tony opted to 'stand back and let it happen':

"My main concern is mixing with the youngsters, they always run down the stairs, they are always in a hurry wherever they are going, sometimes you wander along and you have to get out of the way a bit quick and I don't do quick. Not now." *Dave*

"When you go down for your meal, if there is no one on the landings (prison staff), threes go down when the twos go down, so there is no order to it and it starts a bit of aggravation on the landings, I just stand back and let it happen..." *Eric*. "Yeah, there has been a couple of fights, I just let them get on with it. I just want a quiet life." *Tony*

Therefore, to support their social needs and to feel safe, older prisoners tried to avoid younger prisoners by attending these and other initiatives implemented for older prisoners. One example they discussed was attending a gym session that was only for those over the age of 55. Dave discussed how this initiative supported his social needs through the ability to meet other older prisoners from different wings:

"I go to gym session with the over 55s in the afternoon. I find that less intimidating, when you don't have a lot of youngsters shifting heavy metal. So, if I go with the over 55s, you get people from the other wings you can mix with and talk to, people you

haven't seen for some time and you generally mix in and do what you want to do.”

Dave

The need to have a purpose

The majority of older prisoners who participated in this study discussed a number of social needs, which are explored within the concept of having a purpose. Older prisoners described how attending either of the two initiatives supported these needs, which were identified in the subthemes of: ‘to keep ourselves occupied, and out of our cell’, ‘to support and to be supported’ and ‘I am disabled, I cannot access work’.

To keep ourselves occupied, and out of our cell

Older prisoners identified the need to keep themselves both physically and mentally occupied whilst in prison. This need was addressed through attending one of the two initiatives designed for older prisoners. The concept of being occupied was important to all older prisoners within the study and was closely entwined with the need to leave their cell, as time spent locked in their cell was described as being alone, with nothing to do. Charlie discusses his need to attend an initiative for older prisoners:

“When I first came here (this prison), all I was doing was sitting in my cell doing nothing, until I found out about this group, and I found I could take part in it, up until then I was just sitting in my cell doing nothing.”

Older prisoners recognised the initiatives met their need of keeping occupied and appreciated this. They also recognised that the initiatives did more than getting them out of their cells, supporting them to engage in social activities and socialise with other prisoners, which they believed was good for them. Percy relates his experiences of attending one of the initiatives:

“If we didn’t do this course during the week we would be locked up and we would have nothing to do, and on this course we do all sorts of things, and it is good to get out and be amongst others.”

The Social Task Group depended on prison staff availability and if staff were required elsewhere, or there was a lack of staff on a shift, the initiative was cancelled. Older prisoners believed the cancellation of the group was due to discrimination against older prisoners, as younger prisoners were always a priority. Tom and Jack discussed this issue:

“They (the prison) are always low on officers, and if something happens then we always end up in our cells.” *Tom*. “Which, in itself is kind of discriminatory thing towards older people because we are considered the least important, so it is our group that is cancelled all the time.” *Jack*.

To support and be supported

The social need to have a purpose for older prisoners went beyond that of being occupied, as they identified the need to support others, whilst also requiring support themselves. They addressed this need by attending these two initiatives as, due to their age or mobility issues, they were unable to attend work or education:

“We read books, we take it in turns to read paragraphs, and this helps those who cannot read.” *Albert*. “It encourages them.” *Fred*. “And this supports us who can read, you know, but that is the way it goes.” *Albert*

An element of support and being supported included the collaboration and development of a team to work together. On one occasion, it was to create a Christmas tree out of folded paper. The older prisoners were proud of their team work and the end creation, although they believed it to be ‘a bit strange’, that it was the only Christmas decoration on the wing.

“We made the Christmas tree, it was a team effort, it was the whole group.” *Fred.*

“You did most of it.” *Albert.* “Yeah, I did all the gluing but you guys did all the

folding.” *Fred.* “I did the cutting.” *Percy.* “Yes, some were folding, some were

cutting, a team effort. I had them all working like slaves, I was come on, come on do

more folding.” *Fred*

Older prisoner’s found the social need of belonging and friendship, was addressed through attending a group while working with their peers motivated them to attend these initiatives, learn new skills and ‘drift’ through their sentences together. Charlie and Eric both explored the impact on their social needs of attending these initiatives:

“I don’t have the motivation to do these things (art and craft activities), but when I am in the classroom I do. I find it very motivational... and interesting and you have the social aspect, they are all friendly and all sorts of odd bods.” *Charlie*

“I am enjoying it (attending an initiative), it is prison life, but I don’t see it as being banged up as it isn’t like that here, they are all alright here, making cake and that, you drift along.”

I am disabled, I cannot access work

The social need of having a purpose was difficult for older prisoners, as they found they were unable to work whilst in prison. Although they believed they were capable of completing some of the work tasks, they often could not walk the distance from their cell to the work environments,. Albert clearly identified the distance was too far for him to manage:

“I am a bit disabled, I can’t work because it means walking a long way and then walking back again, and then walking back there again and walking back again, even with this thing (walking frame).”

Older prisoners acknowledged the prison was built in the 1800s with a focus on detaining young men, although, there was a consensus that all prisoners need something to do whilst serving their sentence. Due to this understanding, older prisoners thought the prison and the prison staff were doing ‘pretty well’ to support them.

“The prison does fairly well, this place was never built to handle elderly disabled people in a humane [way] as they were pretty wicked in the 1800s. I think considering the high proportion of elderly people, they do pretty well, but I mean we all need something to do, and for us it is not necessarily involved with anything energetic, what we need is to stimulate our brains.” *Tony*

However, some of the older prisoners discussed the lack of opportunities to engage in other initiatives, such as gardening within the prison, as they were not considered physically able due to their age. Charlie and Arthur discussed how gardening could be supportive for older prisoners:

“I know there are some guys who would like to get involved in gardening, and if they are fit enough to do a bit of weeding or gardening, why not? They would be outside and that would be good for them.” *Charlie*. “I would jump on that straight away as I used to love my garden.” *Arthur*

Discussion

Older prisoners attending one of two initiatives specifically implemented for prisoners over the age of 55 in a prison in England, discussed how these initiatives met some of their social needs, whilst explaining and expanding on their unmet social needs and offering their perspectives on perceived barriers.

This informed the development of two themes, the need to feel safe, and the need to have a purpose. These themes will now be discussed in comparison with wider contemporary literature.

The need to feel safe

Older prisoners reported feeling unsafe due to their perception of younger prisoners being engaged in drug taking, especially referring to spice. A recent study was commissioned to explore the use of Synthetic Cannabinoid Receptor Agonist (SCRA), which covers a range of substances that are commonly referred to as spice, a drug usually only taken in the prison setting (Lloyd *et al.* 2018). The use of spice in prison has significantly increased, which poses a threat to the safety of prisoners and prison staff, as it can lead to bullying and violence (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2015; Ralph *et al.* 2017). Therefore, evidence supports older prisoner's concerns of feeling unsafe around younger prisoners taking spice, and supports the need for initiatives where older prisoners can feel safe.

The collection of medication was highlighted by older prisoners within this study as an issue. Bullying, violence and intimidation of vulnerable prisoners for their prescribed medication has been recognised for over a decade (Burns, 2009). More recently, the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP, 2019) identified the continued and widespread problem of vulnerable prisoners being coerced into relinquishing their prescribed medication. The RCGP guidance (2019) includes the need for medication administration to be supervised by prison staff, to ensure orderly queues for medication and the safety of everyone. Older prisoners within this study discussed the presence of prison officers during medication administration, noting that only some maintained order. However, older prisoners attending the Social Task Group were allowed to collect their medication prior to the rest of their wing/prison, which supported their feelings of safety.

Older prisoners need to feel safe within this study was discussed alongside avoiding younger prisoners. Although the debate of age-segregation did not occur, indirect reference was made to it. . A recent European study explored age-segregated prison housing with prisoners and stakeholders and identified an agreement that prisons should ‘mirror society’ and be cross-generational. Although a separate unit for those with complex health needs and environment requirements would be supportive, however, the criteria for age-segregation needs to be clearly defined, as without such an approach any age-segregation due to the age of the prisoner would be ‘an unreliable public policy’ (Wangmo *et al.*, 2017).

Need to have a purpose

Older prisoners within this study acknowledged the need to attend a prison initiative to support them to leave their cell, have a purpose and keep occupied. Other initiatives for older prisoners implemented have included art workshops (Hongo *et al.*, 2015), music workshops (Wilkinson and Caulfield, 2017), and True Grit (Harrison, 2006; Kopera-Frye *et al.*, 2013). These approaches differed in their focus, structure and supporting staff but, overall, older prisoner’s reported a positive impact through trying something new and connecting with other older prisoners, which supported them to leave their cell and have a purpose. The comprehensive approach of True Grit (Harrison, 2006; Kopera-Frye *et al.*, 2013) and the music interventions (Wilkinson and Caulfield, 2017) were found to support older prisoner’s physical and mental health.

Similar to the results of this study, the music workshop (Wilkinson and Caulfield, 2017) supported older prisoner’s need to have a purpose, which included a musical performance or the creation of a Christmas tree. Furthermore, similar to the results of this study older prisoners attending True Grit (Harrison, 2006), art workshops (Hongo *et al.*, 2015), and music interventions (Wilkinson and Caulfield, 2017) identified they were able to share their

emotions, life experiences, their journey to prison, and traumatic stories. These interactions supported older prisoner's needs as well as supporting their fellow prisoners.

Older prisoners in this study discussed the need to remain occupied and have a purpose and while identifying differences between themselves and younger prisoners, acknowledged that this would also be the same for younger prisoners. However, the coping mechanisms employed by younger prisoners to alleviate boredom in prison sometimes involve taking drugs such as spice, which provide them with an altered state of reality and 'take the bars away for a bit' (Lloyd *et al.*, 2018). Similar to older prisoners, younger prisoners locked in their cells also struggle and spice is their support (Lloyd *et al.*, 2018). The social needs of older and younger prisoners appear to be similar, but differences occur in the coping mechanisms used. The initiatives described in this study supported the coping mechanisms of older prisoners by providing them with purpose and opportunities to socialise with their peers. It should be noted that initiatives beyond work also appear to be necessary for younger prisoners.

Older prisoners within this study discussed the intent to work but, due to the prison environment, often could not walk the distance from their cell to the place of work. The prison environment is recognised as a barrier to supporting older prisoners, as there remains the need to adapt the environment to support the basic needs of older prisoner's such as preventing falls (Cianciolo and Zupan, 2004). A further limitation of many prisons is the limited suitable spaces to implement initiatives for older prisoners (Cashin *et al.*, 2008; Walsh *et al.*, 2014). The environment is an important consideration as older prisoners often have significant difficulty in moving safely around the prison (Tucker *et al.*, 2019). However, financial constraints often act against programmes to adapt Georgian and Victorian prisons, particularly in times of austerity.

Limitations

The limitation of this study is that it was completed in one prison setting in England, with two initiatives that may not be replicable in other prisons. The study did not explore the impact or success of the two initiatives implemented, only older prisoner's perceptions of their social needs and how these are addressed within the prison setting. Therefore, the results of this study need to be positioned in the wider literature, before implementing interventions for older prisoners.

Conclusion and Recommendations

There is a clear need to address the stereotypical beliefs of younger prisoners as drug addicts, and move beyond behaviours and crimes to support a harmonised prison. Both younger and older prisoners need to explore their own mechanisms for coping with being in prison and how to address social needs by engaging with support initiatives provided. Currently, these initiatives include work and courses for younger prisoners and various activities for older prisoners. These initiatives are supportive of both younger and older prisoners but can, simultaneously, maintain the divide between the two generations who are serving their sentences side by side.

A recommendation from this study is that initiatives to support the process of integrating younger and older prisoners should be considered and introduced. This approach could take the form of both integrated and separate initiatives, but should aim to develop cross-generational bi-direction peer support. Finally, due to the impact of complex physical and mental health needs on older prisoner's social needs, there remains a clear need to strive for equity not equality in the provision of health and social support for older prisoners.

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