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**Power, Control, Restraint
The Category A prisoner in the Dispersal Prison System**

**This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the grade of Doctor of Philosophy of the
University of Portsmouth**

ABSTRACT

This thesis presents the experiences endured and knowledge acquired during 14 years as a Category A prisoner in high security dispersal prisons. From that perspective the restrictive rules, regulations and regimes that impact on the lives of an academically overlooked cohort of prisoners '*whose escape would be highly dangerous to the public or the police or to the security of the State*' are subjected to critical appraisal. I have focused on the minutiae of institutional arrangements to illuminate an unmediated and unrecorded exposition of prison life for a category A prisoner.

The origins of dispersal prisons and security classifications are outlined to provide context to the central theme of what it means to be labelled as category A. An essential prerequisite for the continued existence of dispersal prisons is that there must always be a sufficiency of prisoners deemed worthy of category A status. Currently, less than 25% of the population in dispersal prisons is category A. I contend that the category A system is now redundant: the pool of criminality from which category A prisoners are so designated has shrunk. Armed robbers, once the mainstay of the system, are no longer extant and an organised IRA has been replaced by Islamic terrorists, the most dangerous of whom are isolated in anti-radicalisation units. Thus the typical Category A prisoner has, by and large, disappeared but sadly the system remains. The dispersal system is an obsolete, highly expensive anachronism with the original concept of '*a liberal regime within a secure perimeter*' barely a memory. In their current form dispersal prisons are cruel and oppressive and serve no meaningful purpose. Category A categorisation is flawed, obsolete and nonsensical. The effects of supply and demand have perverted the system and decision making on Category A status is unintelligent, ineffective and needlessly cruel. Finally, the use and abuse of a virtually unrestrained power to segregate those prisoners deemed to be troublesome and dangerous is placed in context and the current procedure is analysed.

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List of Abbreviations

1. ACCT	:	Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork
2. BOSS	:	Body Orifice Security Scanner
3. CBT	:	Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy
4. CM	:	Custodial Manager
5. CNA	:	Certified Normal Accommodation
6. DIRF	:	Discrimination Incident Report Form
7. DSPD	:	Dangerous Severe Personality Disorder
8. FOIA	:	Freedom of Information Act
9. GBT	:	Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
10. HMIP	:	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons HMP
11. HMP	:	Her Majesty's Prison
12. HMPPS	:	Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service
13. IDTS	:	Integrated Drug Treatment System
14. IEP	:	Incentives and Earned Privileges
15. IPP	:	Imprisonment for Public Protection
16. IR	:	Information Report
17. LTHSPG	:	Long Term and High Security Prisons Group
18. MAPPA	:	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
19. MQPL	:	Measuring the Quality of Prison Life
20. NOMS	:	National Offender Management Service
21. NRC	:	National Research Committee
22. OAO	:	On the Application of
23. OASys	:	Offender Assessment System
24. PIPE	:	Psychologically Informed Planned Environment
25. PPE	:	Personal Protection Equipment
26. SOTP	:	Sex Offenders Treatment Programme
27. SSJ	:	Secretary of State for Justice
28. TSP	:	Thinking Skills Programme
29. ViSOR	:	Violent Sex Offenders Register
30. VP	:	Vulnerable Prisoner

Foreword

Whilst registered as a candidate for the above degree I have not been registered for any other research award. The results and conclusions embodied in this thesis are the work of the named candidate and have not been submitted or any other academic award.

Signed

Simon Price

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