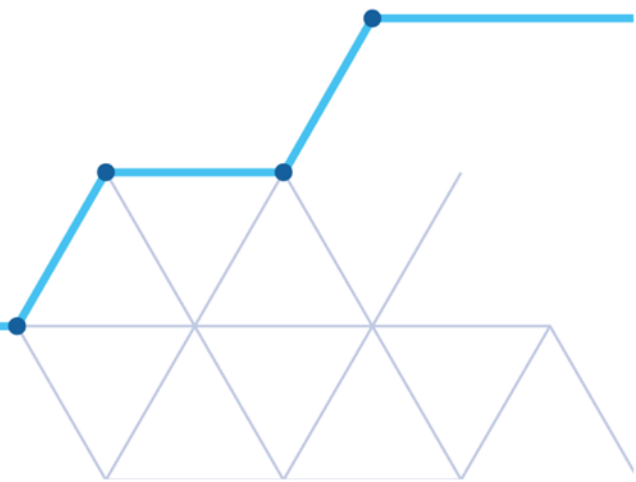# Separating Extremist Prisoners:
A process study of separation centres in England and Wales from a staff perspective

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Prison and Probation Analytical Services

Protecting and advancing the principles of justice

Analytical Services exists to improve policy making, decision taking and practice by the Ministry of Justice. It does this by providing robust, timely and relevant data and advice drawn from research and analysis undertaken by the department's analysts and by the wider research community.

Acknowledgements

Authors

The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily shared by the Ministry of Justice (nor do they represent government policy).

Contents

1.   Summary

This report presents findings of a process study of the set up and early implementation of two Separation Centres (SCs) within the high security prison estate in England and Wales. The centres allow greater separation and specialist management of influential extremists who wield the greatest influence over other prisoners. The process study used qualitative methods to obtain staff and stakeholder views of how the centres had been set up and were operating and whether there were any early indicators that the centres were achieving their intended outcome of containing the risk of 'radicalisation' and reducing risk in the main prison population.

Five fieldwork visits were carried out to the centres at different time points in their implementation and a total of 92 interviews with staff members involved in the development and/or delivery of SCs or key stakeholders were conducted. In addition, 36 interviews were carried out with staff at establishments from where the men had been removed to explore any impact of their removal. Detailed field notes were taken that were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis.

There were a number of limitations to the study and these should be noted when interpreting findings. As with all qualitative research, the views of those interviewed were subjective and may not be representative of all staff at the establishments and all key stakeholders. However, as sample sizes were large and drawn from a range of staff and stakeholder disciplines, a wide range of viewpoints were gathered. The SCs had only been established and running for a relatively short period of time during fieldwork and this should be considered when interpreting findings, especially perceived impact. Finally, it is important to note that the men who had been separated declined to engage in interviews or surveys for the study, so the researchers were unable to obtain their views on the centres.

Key Findings

Respondents reported that two well-run centres had been successfully set up, despite some early teething problems. The key successes of the implementation included the recruitment and retention of highly competent, motivated and experienced officers and multi-disciplinary teams to work on the centres; a comprehensive regime; structured and effective communication systems and the development of a system for monitoring progression. It was widely viewed, by those interviewed, that the centres had successfully separated some of the most influential extremist offenders from the mainstream prison population. There was some

suggestion that this had helped to reduce disruption at their previous locations, although it is challenging to empirically measure the direct impact of removing these individuals.

The lack of engagement by the men, especially in rehabilitation and disengagement interventions, was identified as a significant challenge in the running of the centres. Areas for improvement and lessons learned were also identified from the staff interviews; some of which have now been addressed by the centres. These included the need for a review and refinement of the referral process (including examination of lower than expected numbers of referrals); greater support for Imams working on the centres; the importance of a standard and consistent regime to be delivered across all centres; a clearer progression and/or de-selection route identified (including where an individual does not engage); consideration of the possible long term impact of separation on mental health. Consideration should also be given to those who are separated, including the separation of gang affiliated offenders and those supporting other causes, such as Extreme Right Wing.

This qualitative study provides insight from staff and stakeholders into the set up and early implementation of SCs. Further work would need to be considered to assess delivery once sufficient time has passed to allow sustainable practices to embed into the operation of the centres.

2.   Introduction

2.1   Background

Given the global concerns over terrorism, understanding how best to manage those convicted of terrorist offences is a high priority. Numbers of individuals in prison for terrorism-related offences in Great Britain had continually increased since data recording began in 2009 until 2018, when a 1% decline was recorded (Home Office, 2019). As of the 31st December 2018, there were 221 prisoners in custody for terrorism-related offences across England and Wales. Of these, the majority were categorised as holding Islamist-extremist views (79%), with thirteen percent holding far right-wing ideologies and the remainder (8%) other ideologies. One hundred and eighty-six (84%) of these prisoners had been convicted of terrorism related offences and thirty-five (16%) were on remand (Home Office, 2019).

There is a current debate around the best way to manage those convicted of terrorist offences in prison. Most commonly, extremist prisoners are dispersed throughout the mainstream prison estate and held under normal regimes. Using this method, extremist and non-extremist prisoners are treated in the same way, which has been suggested to reduce perceptions of stigma or elevated status (Williams, 2016). However, it is thought that this approach could increase the risk of influential extremist prisoners exerting their power and influence over other prisoners, therefore increasing the potential for radicalisation (Williams, 2016). Research has shown that prisons can be a breeding ground for radicalisation internationally. For example, Khosrokhavar (2013) suggests that a number factors can make prisons particularly vulnerable to radicalisation such as overcrowding, understaffing and high turnover of staff and prisoners. This, in addition to feelings of frustration at being incarcerated and specific vulnerabilities such as fear for safety, especially among those who have been convicted of crimes such as sex offences, can lead to indoctrination.

The counter-extremism strategy, published in October 2015, highlighted the potential problem for peer-to-peer radicalisation within a prison context, and remarked that there were 1,000 prisoners in custody at the time of writing whose behaviour raised concerns about extremism (Home Office, 2015). A study in 2010 examined the evidence from 15 countries about the levels of radicalisation and reform in prison, and reported that prisons were potential breeding grounds for radicalisation, as they provided "near-perfect conditions in which radical, religiously framed ideologies can flourish" (International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, 2010: 59). There is also evidence to suggest that the greater number of terrorist prisoners increases the obligation to monitor and manage the risk of radicalisation, which can have a negative impact on prisoner-prisoner and prisoner-staff

relationships (Liebling, Arnold & Straub, 2011). A study conducted at HMP Whitemoor, found tensions relating to fears of extremism and radicalisation, which led to increased monitoring by staff, and prisoners feeling as though they were 'victims of staff authority' (Liebling et al, 2011:177).

An alternative to dispersal, is the containment of extremist prisoners, particularly those suspected of radicalisation. Internationally, discussions among practitioners, policy makers and academics have centred on the advantages and disadvantages of placing influential extremists in special units separate from the main prison population (for example the International roundtable and mini-symposium, Correctional Services Canada, 2014; RAN, 2016). The suggested advantages are that such centres allow for close monitoring of behaviours and interactions, reducing the power and influence that these individuals might have on the wider and potentially vulnerable prison population (Butler, 2017). Staff can also be trained in working with these individuals and interventions can be focused on their needs. The disadvantages may include the risk of bonds being strengthened between the separated prisoners, undermining efforts of staff to build relationships and trust. Concerns have been expressed that by being separated together they will reinforce each other's beliefs and become further radicalised. It has been suggested that separation can further entrench feelings of unfairness and legitimise grievances, so reinforcing their oppositional 'them and us' mind-set. Separation also has the potential to enhance the status of the separated prisoners among their supporters and provide a power vacuum that may be filled with other high status individuals from the wing they have left (Jones & Narag, 2019; RAN, 2016; Veldhuis, 2016). Further, researchers have suggested that integrating extremist prisoners in the wider population may have a positive impact on the individuals and facilitate the moderation of their views (Silke & Veldhuis, 2017).

Due to concerns that extremist prisoners may influence others, a number of countries have adopted the policy of separating convicted extremists into specialist wings, including France, Netherlands, Saudi Arabia and Philippines (Jones & Morales, 2012). However, little research has been carried out on separation units to inform whether they successfully meet their aims. A study of the separation wings in the Netherlands highlighted a number of issues with the separation model and made recommendations for their improvement (Veldhuis, 2016). At the time of the implementation of the Dutch wings, the selection policy was standardised, with all prisoners convicted or remanded for terrorism offences being detained together, regardless of their offence and level of engagement with the group cause or ideology. This allowed co-defendants to communicate with each other; charismatic leaders to influence and mobilise followers, hardening their support for the cause; and those convicted of relatively minor

offences being subject to a more restrictive regime building resentment and anger. A recommendation was made that separation should be confined only to those who posed the greatest risk to other prisoners and staff and appropriate selection be made by an advisory committee. The study also recommended that individual risk assessment and regular reviews of separated prisoners took place to determine whether placement on the wing was necessary. A further recommendation was the need to increase the emphasis on rehabilitation and reintegration of the inmates on the wings into the main prison locations. When first opened, there was a restrictive regime with prisoners confined to their cells for the majority of the day with little opportunity to engage in rehabilitative opportunities. While this increased over time, it continued to be difficult to offer a regime based on individual needs due to the increased levels of security, especially when the population of wings increased. While the experience of Dutch prisons can be used to help inform the use of separation in other countries, this may be somewhat limited. As has been highlighted by Silke and Veldhuis (2017) what works in one country may not work in another as a range of contextual factors, such as background and size of the inmate population, available resources and staff, levels of violence and gang activity, inmate culture and characteristics of individuals to be separated can all pose different challenges.

Northern Ireland has a long history, dating back to the early 1970's, of managing terrorists in custody separating Northern Irish Republican and Loyalist prisoners in specialized units in prisons including HMP Belfast, Long Kesh, HMP Maze and HMP Maghaberry (Butler, 2017, Shirlow & McEvoy, 2008, McEvoy, 2001). A review of the separation unit at HMP Maze (which closed in 2000), found significant failings in its delivery that fostered an unsafe environment resulting in deaths of both prisoners and prison staff (Hennessey, 1984). The experience was associated with a significant loss of management control over areas of the prison with paramilitary prisoners gradually, taking over control. The concentration of Northern Irish paramilitary prisoners together also appeared to enhance their commitment to their cause and willingness to engage in protests and hunger strikes. The review lead to the closure of the wing at HMP Maze, in 2000, with forced integration of the prisoners into the main population. A further separation wing was set up in 2003 at HMP Maghaberry after considerable unrest and violence between Northern Irish Republican and Loyalist prisoners, which remains open today. However, separated prisoners continued to present a management challenge, including orchestrating attacks on the homes of prison officers. A review of the prison was commissioned to identify how safety on the wings could be improved (House of Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee; 2003).

A number of recommendations were made that included; ensuring adequate resourcing of the separation wings along with high quality staff training, provision of psychological support and effective management. The review stressed the importance of careful selection to wings, with only those affiliated to paramilitary groups being selected. It highlighted the need for separated regimes to offer the same regime and conditions as mainstream prison, with separated prisoners not being treated significantly worse or better than the ordinary prisoner population, fostering resentment on either side. Although lessons can be learned from the Northern Ireland experience, there are difficulties in drawing parallels between the separation of other extremist-related offenders and Northern Irish paramilitaries because they operate in different social contexts and are characterised by different goals, motivations and recruitment strategies (Rushchenko, 2018).

In terms of current practice with extremist prisoners, there is little published evidence to suggest that separation of extremists is an effective approach to managing these offenders and prevent wider prisoner radicalisation. As has been highlighted above, policies on separation of extremist prisoners across countries differ considerably making comparisons or generalisations across the settings impossible. However, studies of separation wings for both extremist and other prisoner groups can provide important learning for the set-up of future regimes including:

- Careful selection of individuals to centres: Needs to be clear selection processes so that only those who pose the greatest security risk are selected.

- Selection should involve comprehensive assessment of individuals carried out by suitably trained staff. Assessment should be an ongoing process over the course of separation to identify whether risk has reduced or increased.

- The centre should provide rehabilitation work and individually designed, constructive activity, which should be similar to that on offer to those not separated. Opportunities to demonstrate progression and reduction of risk should be made available.

- There should be careful selection of staff to work on the wings with the appropriate skills and experience. Sufficient, specialist training that is ongoing should be provided to all staff. Clear, dedicated management structures should be in place. Staff should be supported and rotated when appropriate.

- Operational policy: should be written operational instructions that everyone is familiar with.

(see Clare & Bottomley, 2001; Shalev & Edgar, 2010; Veldhuis, 2016).

3.   Separation Centres in England and Wales

In September 2015, the then Secretary of State for Justice commissioned a departmental review, supported by external expertise, to assess the threat which Islamist extremism and the radicalisation which sustains it, pose to prisons and probation services; and assess the capability of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) to manage that threat (Acheson, 2016). The review found evidence that Islamist Extremism was a growing problem within the prison estate and that a central co-ordinated strategy was required in order to effectively monitor and counter it. The review found that the threat from Islamist Extremists can manifest in a number of ways within the prison system;

- Muslim criminal gang culture which can result in violence, drug trafficking and criminality inspired or directed by these groups;
- Those convicted of Islamist extremist offences advocating support for Daesh and threats against staff and other prisoners;
- Charismatic Islamist extremist prisoners acting as self-styled 'emirs' and exerting a controlling and radicalising influence on the wider Muslim prison population;
- Aggressive encouragement of conversions to Islam;
- Unsupervised collective worship, sometimes at Friday Prayers including pressure on supervising staff to leave the prayer room;
- Attempts by Islamist extremist prisoners to engineer segregation by landing, by wing, or even by prison;
- Attempts to prevent staff searches by claiming dress is religious;
- Books and educational materials promoting extremist literature available in chaplaincy libraries or held by individual prisoners;
- Intimidation of prison Imams;
- Exploitation of staff fear of being labelled racist; and
- Abuse of 'Rule 39' to smuggle illicit material in and out of the prison.[1]

The Review also found that the policy of dispersal (which had been developed to prevent dangerous and charismatic prisoners exerting undue influence over others) had not been changed or developed to take into account the emerging threat from Islamist extremist prisoners.

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[1] Rule 39 stipulates that staff are unable to open correspondence between prisoners and their legal counsel unless they suspect it is being abused.

Acheson made eleven specific recommendations regarding the management of Islamist extremists within the Prison System. One of these was to remove from the general prison population a small subset of extremists who present a high risk to security through their behaviour, beliefs and activities; placing them in specialist units, where they can be given de-radicalisation interventions (Acheson, 2016). The Government accepted the findings in the review. Acting upon this, HMPPS has begun setting up specialist centres within the high security estate to allow greater separation and specialised management of influential extremists who wield the greatest influence over other prisoners. The aims of the centres are to impact on behaviour in prison by separating those who are considered to present the highest risk, thereby inhibiting radicalisation and disrupting threats. Separation is intended to reduce the risk of these individuals being able to build capability; and intervene and shape the thinking of those who are beginning to become radicalised and/or vulnerable to extremist influences. In addition, the separated men will be expected to participate in work and rehabilitation to address their risk and reasons for their separation.

Acting upon this review, HMPPS has begun setting up specialist centres within the high security prison estate to allow greater separation and specialised management of influential extremists who wield the greatest influence over other prisoners. An amendment to prison service rules was made in 2017 which put in place the regime under rule 46A for a special separation regime for extremist prisoners that would;

> *'provide a statutory basis for the separation from the mainstream prison population of certain prisoners who are assessed to pose particularly serious risks (relating to national security, planning of terrorism, disseminating views encouraging terrorism, or using harmful views to undermine good order and discipline) by removing them from the mainstream population. This will assist in the effective management of prisons and prisoners, to ensure the maintenance of control, security and discipline within prison and to manage terrorism related risks posed by certain prisoners'.*
> Explanatory Memorandum to the Prison (Amendment) Rules 2017.

Funding was released for three separation centres (SCs) to be located in three different high security prisons. The prisons are part of the high security estate in England and Wales, where eight prisons house individuals who require closer monitoring because they present a greater security risk. The centres have been set up to accommodate prisoners who are supportive of any extremist group, cause or ideology. The first centre was opened in June 2017 at HMP Frankland and the second centre in March 2018 at HMP Full Sutton. The

centres each had capacity to house eight men. The opening of the third centre is currently on hold. Over the study's fieldwork period, each centre had accommodated between three and six men at any one time.

The centres have significantly higher staffing levels than the "host" prison, being similar to other small units such as Close Supervision Centres (CSCs)[2] to provide a highly supervised protective environment to counter some of the risks that exist in a less restricted environment.

This enables the delivery of individually tailored regimes that support the management of prisoners towards reducing the risks that led to their selection into the centre. Each centre has a staffing compliment of four supervising officers and 18 officers, with between 3 -6 officers and one supervising officer on duty at any one time. The men, while separated from prisoners in main locations, are allowed to interact with each other. Individual risk assessments and planning are carried out to inform activity and management of the prisoner.

Individuals are referred to the centre and will undergo an assessment process before a decision is made about their separation onto the centres.

Referral into the separation centres, where it is desirable, will be on the basis of;
- the interests of national security;
- to prevent the commission, preparation or instigation of an act of terrorism, a terrorism offence or an offence with a terrorist connection whether in prison or otherwise;
- to prevent the dissemination of views or beliefs that might encourage or induce others to commit any such act or offence, whether in prison or otherwise, or to protect or safeguard others from such views or beliefs; or
- to prevent any political, religious or racial views or beliefs or other ideology being used to undermine good order and discipline in a prison.

Prisoners meeting the criteria may be referred through the Pathfinder extremist prisoner management processes or directly to the Separation Centre Management Committee, where HMPPS will make decisions about selection. Partner agencies are also involved in both the referral and selection stages.

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[2] Close Supervision Centres allow the removal of the most disruptive, challenging and dangerous prisoners from their ordinary prison location and manage them within small and highly supervised units.

The separation centres are overseen by an internal advisory committee. HMPPS has sought external advice on their operation from the local and national prisons Independent Monitoring Board (IMB), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) and the centres have been visited by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Researchers in Ministry of Justice (MoJ) have undertaken a process study of the centres to explore their set up, early implementation and draw out learning for possible future roll out. Fieldwork for the study was carried out between July 2017 and December 2018. This report summarises the findings from the research.

3.1   Research Aims

The aims of the qualitative process study were to explore the setting up and early implementation of the centres. Any preliminary indicators of success and areas for improvement were also explored.

The research sought to answer the following research questions:

I.   Have the centres been set up as intended and delivering to their stated aims? What are the successes and failures in the development/delivery of the centres and what lessons can be learnt for future delivery? Are they providing a secure, safe and decent environment for the men housed on them?

II.   Are there any early indicators that the centres are achieving their intended outcomes and can this be measured, i.e. are there any indicators to suggest whether the centres are containing the risk of 'radicalisation' and reducing risk in the main prison population?

There was a supplementary research question, which was to examine whether any data was being collected that could inform an outcome study of the centres. A summary of this is presented in Appendix B.

3.2   Methodology

As the process study was exploratory, a qualitative approach was used. Centres at both prisons were included in the study. During the study period, three fieldwork visits were carried out at the centre at HMP Frankland and two at the HMP Full Sutton centre at different time points in the implementation. MoJ researchers liaised with the HMPPS management committee and prison Governors at each site (including those where the centres were

housed and those establishments where prisoners had been removed) in order to agree the most appropriate timing of the research and access to staff and prisoners for interviews.

The research was granted approval by the HMPPS National Research Committee[3] (reference 2017 – 064).

Interviews were carried out with a range of staff, across the two establishments, at each visit and included;

- 32 interviews with officers and managers (which represented over half of all SC staff; some staff were interviewed more than once on follow up visits) and 30 interviews with staff involved in the delivery of the centre from a range of disciplines including psychology, chaplaincy, education, Counter Terrorism (CT) and healthcare (at least two members of staff from each discipline were interviewed at each location). All SC officers and managers who were available on the fieldwork days were interviewed. Other staff respondents were selected for interview because of their involvement in working with the centre.
- 8 interviews with senior staff at the establishments that house the centres (including, CT managers and Governors).

In addition, six key stakeholders were interviewed at two time points; within the first three months of operation of the first centre and again two months after the second centre had opened. Respondents were selected because they had been involved in the management of the set up and delivery. They included HMPPS managers and staff from partnership organisations including Police and M15.

Ten Long Term and High Security Estate (LTHSE) CT staff and CT regional leads were also interviewed to seek their views on the centres and their experience of referrals to centres at two time points.

See Appendix A for a summary of timings of interviews.

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[3] All proposed research in prison establishments, National Probation Service, Community Rehabilitation Companies or within HMPPS Headquarters requires approval from the MoJ/HMPPS National Research Committee. The NRC exists to ensure: the research applicant, MoJ and HMPPS attain best value from the research conducted; the resource implications and impact of the research on operational delivery is considered; the robustness and relevance of the research is adequately assessed; and, matters of data protection/security and research ethics are dealt with in a consistent manner.

A sample of staff at each establishment from where men were removed were interviewed. Interviews took place within the first month of removal. Respondents were selected because of their insight into the behaviour of the separated individual and the impact of their removal. This included staff from the wing on which they were housed, workshop staff, Counter Terrorism Unit (CTU) staff, Pathfinder leads, Chaplaincy and Psychology. A total of 36 interviews were carried out across five different establishments.

All the men who were separated and housed on the centres during the course of the fieldwork were invited to participate in an interview with the researchers, but all declined to take part. The men were then given the opportunity to complete a short survey, which they also refused.

Interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis, in a private location, using interview schedules specifically designed for the purposes of the study. All interviews were carried out face to face apart from those with LTHSE and Regional CT staff and key stakeholders, which were telephone interviews. Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to an hour with detailed field notes being made. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents. All the research team were involved in conducting interviews.

Transcripts of the interviews were analysed using thematic analysis to seek the views of staff and stakeholders on; the extent that the centres had been set up as intended and delivering to their stated aims; the successes, areas for improvement and key challenges in the development/early delivery of the centres; the lessons that could be learnt for future delivery; whether they were providing a secure, safe and decent environment for the men housed on them; the impact upon establishments from where the men were removed and perceptions that the centres were achieving their intended outcomes by containing the risk of 'radicalisation' and reducing risk in the main prison population.

Data being routinely collated by the SCs was also collated and reviewed to examine whether it could be used to inform an outcome study of the centres. These included data on throughput of men, intelligence and behavioural reporting. See Appendix B.

Interpreting Findings

There were a number of methodological limitations to the study, which should be considered when interpreting the findings. As with all qualitative research, the views of those interviewed were subjective and may not be representative of all staff at the establishments and all key stakeholders. However, as sample sizes were large and drawn from a range of disciplines, a

wide range of viewpoints were gathered, which allows for greater representation. The SCs had only been established and running for a relatively short period of time during fieldwork and this should be considered when interpreting findings, especially perceived impact. Finally, the men who had been separated declined to engage in interviews or provide written feedback for the study, so the researchers were unable to obtain their views on the centres.

4.   Findings

4.1   Concept of separation

Most respondents agreed with the principle of SCs and felt there was a strong need for separation of the most influential extremist prisoners. Some felt that this approach should have been adopted some time ago, given the problems of extremist activity they had observed within their establishment. A minority of those interviewed expressed concerns that this approach may enhance the status of the individuals, increasing their perception as being martyrs and feeding into the ideology. Further concerns were raised about placing extremists together and comparisons were made with the management of Irish Nationalists and American prisons where a 'ghetto culture' can exist. But despite this, it was generally agreed that SCs had to be trialled as the present system was not always sufficient to manage the most influential prisoners.

4.2   Set-up of centres

Respondents reported that two centres had been successfully set up and were operating well. All those interviewed felt that a comprehensive and appropriate regime was being provided for the men with a full range of activities. This was largely attributed to the strength of the project team, in terms of their skills, experience and solution focused approach. Staff at the Frankland centre reported that setting up their centre had been challenging, mainly because of the time constraints and having no precedent to follow. Many decisions had to be made locally often by trial and error. Full Sutton had the advantage of learning from Frankland, with Frankland staff offering guidance and support, which was considered invaluable.

A number of early implementation and teething problems were encountered by both centres, mainly because of the over-running of building work and ensuring all necessary equipment was in place. Further initial problems were encountered with the men's co-operation on the centres, such as them refusing to conduct cleaning duties on the centres. However, over the course of the fieldwork, a new process was implemented where participation was linked to incentives and earned privileges which addressed this issue.

Ensuring all key stakeholders were involved in the implementation of the centres was considered essential to their success. For example, having probation, psychology, education, healthcare, Prison Officers Association (POA) members, CTU staff and external stakeholders such as intelligence services and the police were thought to aid the set-up. The external key

stakeholders who were interviewed offered particular praise for this collaborative working, describing having developed a 'constructive and honest working relationship' with partners.

4.3   Selection

By the end of the fieldwork phase of the study several men had been placed in the SCs, all of whom were supportive of Islamist extremism causes. Some were subsequently released from custody. It was generally agreed, by two thirds of those interviewed, that the majority of the men on the centres were appropriate for separation and presented the greatest problems. Some respondents stressed the need to ensure separation decisions were based on actual levels of risk rather than public perceptions of risk and commented that high profile offenders may not always present the highest risk. A few of the separated men had been convicted of gang-related offences rather than in support of extremist causes or ideologies, but had begun to demonstrate problematic extremist behaviour while in custody. A minority of respondents questioned the appropriateness of the separation of these men and expressed concerns that their extremist views may harden by being isolated with other convicted extremists.

Nearly half the respondents suggested that separation should also be considered for those who hold Extreme Right Wing (XRW) views and present security challenges in the future, as they could become equally as influential as Islamist extremists and were likely to become increasingly problematic if numbers increase. Staff at both centres thought they could manage both Islamist and XRW offenders on the same centre. At the time of the fieldwork, there had been no referrals made for XRW offenders. While it was noted that there was an increased risk from this population, CT staff reported that there were no individuals who yet met the criteria who could not be managed using alternative strategies. However, the centres had been set up to hold any type of extremist prisoner. When questioned on the need for separation for female or young extremist prisoners, the majority of respondents did not think there was any immediate need as they felt that they tended not to present the same problems as adult male extremist prisoners.

4.4   Referrals

It was generally agreed that the process for referral was not as straightforward as it could be and best practice still needed to be identified. Staff who had written referrals found them to be time consuming, repetitive and lengthy. While it was acknowledged that a defensible justification for their separation and explanation of their risk needed to be a clearly articulated, respondents thought the process could be streamlined and made more user

friendly. Referrals had generally been made by staff within the LTHS estate. Those that had made unsuccessful referrals could not necessarily understand why they had not been accepted. They also felt that the feedback they had been provided was not always helpful in understanding why they had been unsuccessful. The available guidance was considered to be limited and staff asked for a good practice guide with examples of what a successful referral would look like. Since the fieldwork for the study was conducted, a detailed referral guide was drafted and implemented.

A concern reported by staff was how to evidence behaviours when the intelligence was covert, and sources needed to remain protected. It was noted that it could be difficult to present such information in a disclosable form that may be subject to legal challenges. It was also thought that the ongoing legal action by some of the men may have discouraged some staff in making referrals, given the expectation that intelligence data could possibly be shared more widely and beyond HMPPS staff.

Fewer referrals had been made to the SCs than had been expected by those interviewed.[4] Respondents were unclear as to why this was. Some discussed whether there had been a change in the types of prisoners in the wider estate, or whether prisoners had modified their behaviour, so fewer individuals were presenting a risk in terms of their extremist influence. It had been noted that some of the more prominent prisoners were being less disruptive and influential since the introduction of SCs, which they speculated was deliberately to avoid being separated. Others thought it was because of low recording of extremism behaviours, especially as these did not always present the most immediate safety problems when staff were also dealing with issues such as consumption and trading of drugs, bullying, self-harm etc. Over a third highlighted the importance of good communication with wing staff to ensure they remain vigilant in recording extremist observed activities and were made aware of how the information they provided was used, perhaps in the form of regular briefings. A quarter of respondents suggested that the low level of referrals was because the selection criteria into the SCs was too restrictive.

4.5   Staff Training & Support

The staff at both SCs participated in two training sessions to prepare for working on the SC. The first week focused upon increasing understanding extremism and the Muslim faith. This part of the training was generally praised by those who were interviewed, with over three quarters reporting it to be thorough, informative and useful for their new roles. Particular

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[4]   A target for the number of prisoners referred to SCs was not set.

praise was given to the in-depth knowledge of the tutors. A minority reported that they had found the training to be intense and had difficulty absorbing the volume of information, although they acknowledged that it was all necessary. The second training session focused upon staff wellbeing and staff resilience. It included a team building exercise, the nature of which differed between the two SCs. The team building had a mixed response, with positive feedback from one site but less so from the other site. Many staff at one site felt the team building did not add value and would have preferred to use the time working through the operational manual and other day-to-day practices in order to feel more confident in daily routines for when the men arrived.

At follow up interviews, staff were asked to reflect on their training and how well it had equipped them for day to day working on the SC. Officers generally felt the training had been adequate, having found the content on knowing yourself and setting boundaries and limits to be especially useful. Over half of those interviewed expressed a desire for ongoing and top-up training, especially to gain a deeper cultural and religious awareness so they could better differentiate between cultural/religious and extremist behaviours. Several respondents also noted that criminal behaviours evolve and change, so ongoing training would help to keep them fully informed and responsive. Some also suggested key phrase booklets be provided to all staff which would help to increase their Arabic language skills which would help to break down barriers, especially as Arabic was the primary language for some of the separated men.

All those working on the SCs agreed that they had excellent support from their peers. Officers at both centres felt they had gelled as teams and developed strong, supportive working relationships, built on mutual respect. In addition, they spoke of support offered to them by colleagues from other disciplines, in particular psychology, probation and education. At one site, management was also singled out for praise and noted as being a strong motivator for officers. Staff at the other site were less positive about the management team. This was because there had been a change in personnel during the implementation phase and no dedicated manager at the centre, so management were covering several different functions across the establishment and had less time available to work on the centre.

The officers at both centres reported having developed effective communication systems with each other which allowed them to share best practice and offer support. They found this to be helpful and stressed the need for it to continue over the longer term.

4.6 Delivery of SC

At the time of the follow up fieldwork visit, the two centres were reported by those interviewed to be running well, succeeding in providing a safe, secure and decent environment for the men with a good structure and regime. In particular the regime was considered to be comprehensive in meeting the needs of the men and ensuring individuals were not disadvantaged by being separated. Staff reported working tirelessly to provide a regime comparable to that provided in the main prison. However, their efforts were frustrated by the lack of engagement in some aspects of the regime by the men (see below for further detail). This lack of engagement impacted upon the centres being able to work on the men's disengagement from extremism and progression off the centres back to the main prison location.

At the second centre, concerns were raised that there were some ambiguities in the operating manual. Certain areas were open to interpretation which meant officers sometimes found they were being inconsistent when enforcing rules which had led to challenges from some of the men. Examples included rules on communication, acceptable language and behaviours, in cell association and access to library. Since the fieldwork for the study was completed, staff have been encouraged to comment and make changes on the operating manual which, at the time of writing, was in the process of being revised. In addition, staff discussed how disclosure of information needed to be clearly articulated to all staff and consideration given to when information should be provided anonymously and staff names redacted.

All those interviewed stressed the need for a standard, consistent regime and rules across the two SCs. This was considered to be more important than trying to make the centres broadly comparable with mainstream, as they believed small units could not be expected to offer the same as standard prison locations. However, they felt prisoners had more legitimacy in raising complaints where regimes and rules differed between the SCs. Addressing some of the ambiguities in the operational manual were suggested as ways to improve consistency.

Over the course of the fieldwork period, prisoners were transferred between the centres. SC staff noted that the transfer process was working well and communication between the centres had facilitated this smooth transition. In addition, staff praised the briefing provided by HMPPS, which gave officers important background knowledge. Communication between managers was also considered to be working effectively. However, a few staff outside of the

officer team thought communication had been less successful and reported that information was not always disseminated to them.

4.7   Staffing

The importance of having competent, experienced staff working on the centres was highlighted by all those interviewed. They also needed to have personal characteristics that enabled them to engage with prisoners and build rapport but not be afraid to challenge. It was noted that the staff working on both the SCs were highly motivated, despite having experienced lack of engagement from the men. Some concerns had been initially raised at the first interviews that staff may become frustrated or bored, as the units may not be as challenging as they anticipated, especially as they were an experienced, motivated and competent staff group who wanted to keep busy. However, this did not appear to be the case, with all the officers interviewed discussing the satisfaction they had in working on the centres. The experience of the SC officers and the good working relationships they had developed with each other were considered to be a key strength. While it was acknowledged that staffing levels on the centres were high, this was considered to be important as it gave them time to identify subtle changes in the men's behaviour and obtain important intelligence information. It was however noted that, while it was important to recruit competent, experienced staff, care should be taken to recruit from across the establishment to avoid creating a skills gap in one location.

4.8   Chaplaincy

The role of Chaplains employed by HMPPS is to meet the faith and pastoral needs of prisoners. Part of the role of a Muslim Chaplain is to teach the correct interpretation of the faith, which may include indirect challenging incorrect interpretations of the faith. All staff interviewed stressed the importance of the Imam's to the centre and discussed how they were relied upon to provide clarity on extremist behaviour and differentiation with usual religious practice. In the first few months of the centres being open, relationships between the Imams and staff and Imams and the men were reported to be working well. The Imams were praised, by those interviewed, for their expert knowledge of the Quran and the time they spent with the men to challenge extremist viewpoints, correct inaccuracies and increase their Islamic understanding. Staff recognised the difficulties placed on Imams to ensure they fulfilled their role of offering pastoral care while challenging extremist rhetoric and building trust with both the men and the officers. They also discussed how relationship building for the Imams could be difficult, as they were viewed by some of the men as 'Government Imams'. A

few officers also raised questions about the rules for Chaplaincy[5] in terms of disclosure of their discussions with the men and whether conversations should take place in Arabic rather than English. They were not clear on the policy and suggested greater clarity could improve officer/Imam relationships. Some Imams were not able to have as much of a presence on the centres as staff would like. Over the course of the fieldwork, some of the men had disengaged with a few of the Imams and with Friday prayers delivered on the SCs. Prison policy dictates that three or more prisoners must be present for corporate worship to take place. As some men were not always engaging, numbers for Friday prayers were often insufficient (given the small number of men on the centres) so could not take place.

It was stressed by over half of the staff respondents that Imams working with SCs need to be experienced in working in a high security prison environment, have experience of working with prisoners convicted under terrorism legislation of a terrorist or terrorism related offence (TACT) and be highly knowledgeable of the Quran. A few respondents suggested that this could be best achieved by having different grade bandings for Chaplaincy teams, so those with the highest level of expertise and experience could be recruited to a higher grade. There was some discussion around the difficulties in recruiting prison Imams and this was suggested as a way to attract those who are most qualified to apply.   Since the SCs were opened a new training package has been developed and implemented for selected prison imams to deliver interventions and address extremist ideology. Whilst the interventions are aimed largely at men on mainstream location the training could be used for those located in SCs.

The Imams who were interviewed as part of the study stressed the difficult role they fulfilled. They highlighted that challenging SC prisoners' views was not as simple as telling them they were wrong, but needed to offer different interpretations and alternative thinking, as well as building up trusting relationships with the men. They noted that this took time and required expertise, which had been challenging especially as some Chaplaincy teams were experiencing staff shortages. Respondents outside of Chaplaincy also expressed concern over the challenging role of the Imams and the need to ensure they were fully supported. Over the course of the fieldwork this began to be addressed with Imams working at both centres having regular scheduled meetings to share knowledge and best practice, which

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[5]   Generally, discussions with prison chaplains are held in confidence unless anything which threatens the security of the prison or any individual, prisoner or staff, is disclosed. However, interactions on the SCs are usually recorded by Imams, unless the prisoner has specifically indicated that they would like a confidential talk and it does not fall into any of the above. Prisoners should be informed, when they come into SC, that Imams are duty bound to report interactions, unless stated otherwise.

were well received. There has been a general reluctance of chaplaincy staff from other faiths wishing to get involved in the centres as the population composition suggested that these were largely the responsibilities of an Imam.   Managers on the centres reported having worked hard to address this but the lack of a statutory obligation to visit the centres made this challenging to enforce. These issues highlight the difficult role that Imams fulfil to ensure they can develop and maintain trusting relationships with both staff and prisoners.

4.9   Activities and rehabilitation

The importance of being able to offer a full range of activities to the men was stressed by respondents. There had been some very early teething problems at both centres in terms of installation of educational equipment, but this was quickly addressed and centres were successfully offering a comprehensive curriculum. Respondents discussed the dedication of the education team in ensuring a wide diversity of activities could be provided. It was noted at the study follow up visits that, while the men were engaging less with SC officers, they were generally continuing to engage with education staff, although levels had varied. Staff also reported that the men had regular access to a gym, which they frequently used. At one centre, the men had made complaints about the lack of work activities, but it was acknowledged that this was an issue across the establishment. At the other centre, processes had been put in place to allow the men to have access to the workshops.

The men's level of engagement with Psychology services[6] had also fluctuated. One of the men had begun to engage with the ERG22+[7] assessment process and a specialist disengagement intervention 'Healthy Identity Intervention' (HII)[8] prior to being separated, which he continued while on the SC, but had disengaged by the end of the fieldwork. Another also began to engage with the ERG22+ while in the SC, but also ceased. The remaining men had not engaged with the ERG22+, HII or with other offending behaviour interventions either on the SC or prior to separation.

4.10   Staff Communication

Good communication among all key stakeholders and systems for information exchange were reported as essential for the set up and smooth running of the centres. Daily briefings

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[6] Psychology services provide an important role in prisons. Forensic psychologists are involved in the assessment and treatment of prisoners.

[7] The Extremism Risk Guidelines (ERG22+) is structured risk and need formulation tool used across HMPPS to manage extremist offenders.

[8] Healthy Identity Intervention (HII) is a psychologically informed intervention for extremist offenders developed by HMPPS. The purpose of HII is to try and prevent individuals from committing future extremist offences by encouraging and empowering participants to disengage from an extremist group, cause or ideology.

had been put in place from the outset and provided an opportunity for all staff involved in the SCs to share information. At one centre, CTU staff attended briefings, which was especially useful in terms of intelligence sharing. CTU staff at the centre where this arrangement was not in place felt less well informed about activities on the centre, which led to some frustrations and feelings of being marginalised.

An HMPPS staff member provided briefings on most of the men prior to their separation which were praised by SC staff for being comprehensive and informative. Officers felt it was essential to have this information on the individuals so they felt prepared for their arrival. On occasions where it had not been possible to provide briefings, officers felt this had hindered their induction.

At the follow up interviews, it was noted that better communication was needed between the SC staff and the litigation team so that staff at the SC were fully aware of any legal challenges the men may be making. They felt this was important information in terms of their management of the men and they were sometimes being left out of the communications.

4.11   Progression

At the first phase of fieldwork, there was much discussion among respondents of the difficulties that may be encountered when de-selecting individuals. It was agreed that there needed to be strong justifications for moving an individual back into the mainstream prison. De-selection decisions would need to evidence the individual had reduced their risk, which would be difficult given the restrictions placed on them in the SC. At this stage, it was not clear what behaviours/progression would indicate someone was ready to enter main prison locations and how this process would happen.

A care planning system was developed at Frankland that was also implemented at Full Sutton. The care plans became mandatory and were intended to establish targets that the men would work towards and be monitored against. The men would be expected to provide evidence they were working towards their targets and this would be linked to the IEP (Incentives and Earned Privileges) scheme. Progress would be reviewed with their keyworkers. When they were first implemented, staff were energised about the new system as they could see this offered a clearer process to monitor progress. They felt that the care plans would help to ensure that the men on the SC were working towards agreed targets which would ultimately allow them to progress off the SC, but would also act as a facilitator to engage.

At the follow up interviews, staff reported that the majority of the men had not fully engaged with the care plan process so the system was not working as well as it could, especially as a tool to demonstrate progress. Their lack of engagement was thought to be for a number of reasons including; advice from their solicitors; because they wanted to undermine the success of the centres; and, because some were happy on SCs and did not want to be moved back to main prison locations. Staff interviewed raised questions about how the process of de-selection would be managed and the changes that would be expected in the men for them to progress off the centre, especially where they had not engaged with the care plan and target setting. They questioned how the men would be assessed to measure their extremist behaviour prior to being moved back to mainstream prison locations and how the impact of being accommodated in the SC would be measured. Over a quarter thought they should be moved back to main prison locations regardless of their progress, where they could be monitored and assessed to see if they are presenting a security and/or discipline challenge, using the SCs for only a limited time period. Other respondents thought that those who did not comply with care planning and engage in interventions should be retained on the SC as they had not reduced their risk and addressed the behaviours for which they were separated.

Opinions were divided over what could be considered evidence of progression. Nearly a third of staff felt that this must include clear and regular engagement with Psychology, Chaplaincy and the care-planning process, while a quarter felt that engagement with other disciplines such as Education could be sufficient. Respondents also discussed the importance of having a good risk assessment to help inform the process of progression and de-selection. As the SCs housed determinate sentenced prisoners, so had a fixed sentence length with a clear release date, the need for effective communication and liaison with probation staff was also highlighted.

4.12   Perceived Impact of Separation/Behaviour/ Engagement with SC

At the first fieldwork visits to the centres, the separated men were generally reported to be engaging well with staff. Officers said they had built up a good rapport with the men and were going to great lengths to engage with them which had resulted in the men opening up and being more responsive over time. The men were also reported, by those interviewed, to be interacting well with each other. However, by the follow up field visits, their engagement with staff was reported to have reduced at both centres. Staff also noted that, over time, the men had become more challenging and pushing boundaries in very small, subtle ways. Each incident was not very significant in isolation but when put together gave a picture of

challenging/anti-authority behaviour. For example, complaints were made by the men that the provision was not 'like for like' and those on main prison locations or at the other SC were being offered more. All the men were using the same legal team,[9] so comparisons were often made through their legal channels. The number of recorded complaints made by the men varied over the 18 month study period and by location, with 56 complaints having been made at Frankland and 210 at Full Sutton (over half the complaints at Full Sutton were made by one individual). Complaints tended to centre around the regime being offered and were often duplicate complaints. When staff provided requested activities (where appropriate), the men did not always engage, suggesting to staff this was an attempt to challenge rather than for a genuine desire to take part. As a number of the men were legally challenging their separation onto the centres, some of the resistance to engaging was perceived to stem from this.

The men's levels of engagement in activities and the regime had also fluctuated over the course of the fieldwork. As noted above, there had been some engagement with education, chaplaincy and psychology but the levels of participation had varied. In some cases this was thought to depend upon the influence of key prisoners on the centre, who would encourage or dissuade others to take part. It was also noted that a change in rules for pay may have incentivised the men to re-engage in some aspects of the regime, such as work and education. It was also noted that engagement was not necessarily a result of being accommodated on the SC given that these men had also not engaged with disengagement interventions while in their previous prison locations.

At both centres, staff reported that the prisoners felt they were being discriminated against by being placed in an SC, particularly as all those separated were Muslim. There were some reports of the men referring to the centres as 'concentration camps', 'Guantanamo Bay' and 'Muslim centres'. Staff who were interviewed had differing views about the men's comments, with some believing they genuinely felt discriminated against, while others thought it was another way for the men to push boundaries. During the course of the fieldwork one significant incident had occurred at one centre, which resulted in two prisoner adjudications and time in segregation. This was described by staff as a 'protest' by the prisoners regarding their views on their separation. Staff felt the incident was well handled and contained, and enabled them to re-evaluate the SC environment to reduce the risk of further incidents.

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[9] The men were legally challenging being placed in the SCs.

The number of proven prison adjudications[10] for the men were collated for the 18 month study period. In total, there had been 13 proven adjudications across the two centres, with all the charges being made against 3 men. The remaining men had no adjudications against them during the 18 months. In the 18 months prior to separation, four of the men had received a total of 18 proven adjudications. This ranged from one to 10 adjudications each.

Despite some of the men's behaviour, officers interviewed at both centres reported they were able to manage them. Much of this was credited to the experience/personal attributes of the staffing team. Some officers noted that the dynamics of the prisoners in the SCs changed depending upon who was located on the centre. There were clearly some men who were more influential and intent upon disruption than others and able exert this influence over particular individuals.

There was no clear evidence during the fieldwork that the men were sharing skills or attempting to develop networks to engage in extremist activities. However, staff did raise concerns about one separated prisoner as it appeared he had actively set out to be separated. They believed separation was enhancing his status and that he may be attempting to learn from the other prisoners to further his understanding of extremist rhetoric. Concerns were also raised by some staff that 'gang-affiliated' offenders referred to the SC could be at risk of increasing their knowledge and entrenching their ideology, although there was no direct evidence of this. Given the lack of observed signs of disengagement in any of the men at this stage, the risk of further entrenching or increasing extremist views should be considered as a potential problem of separating the most influential individuals together.

At the first fieldwork interviews, many staff reported having concerns about the level of information they were able to disclose to the individuals about their separation. They felt they needed to be open and honest, providing examples of behaviour to help with relationship building and gauging risk. However, during the course of the fieldwork an approach to disclosing as much as possible was implemented, which the staff considered to be important in their ability to supervise the men.

Respondents raised concerns about the impact that separation could have on the mental health of individuals who were separated for extended periods (at the time of the fieldwork, none of the separated men had been progressively moved back to main locations). Some

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[10] When prisoners are found to have broken prison rules, they are subject to adjudications and charged when found guilty.

prisoners had raised the issue of mental health and staff had responded quickly by making the appropriate referrals. However, these referrals and offers of support had not been taken up by the men, which led staff to believe this was a tactic to test boundaries and cause disruption. Despite this, any comments made by the men were reported to be taken seriously, as staff commented that they understood the potential impact imprisonment could have on mental health.

4.13   Perceived Impact of Separation on Wing/Establishment

Interviews were carried out with staff from establishments where men had been removed to examine their perceptions of change as a consequence of separation. Measuring the exact impact that removal of the men had had on their previous locations was challenging because many had been transferred from closed wing locations so their behaviour was already restricted. Additionally, at some of the previous locations, more than one prisoner was moved at the same time, so while an impact may have been observed, it was difficult to attribute this to the individual who had been separated. Despite this, staff did report some improvements at the establishments, for example, there was less disruption, less challenging of authority and improved staff-prisoner relationships and Muslim – non-Muslim prisoner relationships. In fact, in some cases, the impact of the men's removal was reported to be marked. The influence that these men had on the wings tended to be more around disruption and challenging authority than overt extremist activity. During the fieldwork period, there was no evidence of another prisoner having succeeded in taking the men's places and having the same level of influence. Staff from the establishments where men were removed also felt that those selected were right to be separated due to the behaviours they had demonstrated in mainstream locations. For those prisoners who had previously been separated from main prison locations, staff felt that the impact of their removal had been minimal. However, there were some reports of prisoners appearing more relaxed when the men were absent, such as in workshops and Friday prayers.

4.14   Perceived Impact of SCs on Prison Estate

Since the introduction of the SCs it had been noted by LTHSE CT staff that those who were generally considered to be the most influential in the main prison locations were keeping a low profile and engaging more with the regime and offence focused work. For example, one high security prison noted that reported incidents to CTU had halved since the introduction of the SCs (although this was not validated as part of this study). CT staff felt this may be due to concerns about being separated and engaging in any behaviours that could be considered to be radicalising. They were also aware that prisoners had been informed that once they

were placed on the SC they would be unable to interact with others and would be closely monitored, which may have influenced their behaviour. However, staff acknowledged that this behaviour change may be for progression reasons and a desire to move through the system. Similarly, Imams who were interviewed noted that extremist prisoners were worried about being placed on a SC.

Staff generally thought most of the TACT offenders saw separation as a hindrance to their progression whereas there was some concern about particular gang aligned prisoners. It was thought that a few individuals may see separation as a 'badge of honour' and an opportunity to acquire knowledge and network.

In terms of discussion among mainstream prisoners, staff reported hearing very few conversations about the SCs and the men who had been separated. Staff felt there was little evidence to suggest that being separated had enhanced their status in any way.

Regional CT leads discussed any impact on the wider estate. They all felt that the prisoners in their regions had some awareness of the separation centres but they had received no intelligence to suggest the opening of the centres had impacted on the behaviour of prisoners.

4.15   Key Strengths/Successes

Both separation centres were reported to have successfully set up and delivered a separation centre over the course of the 18 month study period. There were a number of particular reported successes that were noted during the fieldwork.

- Both centres had succeeded in recruiting a strong, supportive team of staff. Staff from all the disciplines included in the research were experienced and committed to making the centre a success, with a strong 'can-do' attitude. Officers had personal attributes that allowed them to build rapport while being unafraid to challenge. This motivation had been sustained over time, despite staff having faced a number of challenges.
- A comprehensive regime was being offered at both centres with a wide range of activities that were reported to compare favourably to that provided on the main prison locations. This was largely attributed to the dedication and perseverance of staff. However, it should be noted that take up of some of these activities, especially those that addressed offending behaviour, was low among the men and decreased over time.

- A multi-disciplinary team had been established, with each of the disciplines having clear roles and responsibilities. A strength was considered to be having this team in place from the outset, so contributions could be made to the set-up from different perspectives.

- Effective, timely communication systems had been established with good sharing of information across the multi-disciplinary team. Communication was considered to be essential and had been facilitated at one centre by everyone's attendance at the daily briefings; this allowed information to be shared in real time.

- Care plans had been implemented at both centres which were intended to help inform and guide the men's progression. They provided a system for a transparent and structured process to set goals and monitor progress, although it was noted that, while the system was in place, all the separated men had refused to engage.

- A high staff to prisoner ratio on the SCs meant the officers had time to interact with the men, ensuring a closely controlled and calm regime. It also enabled staff to notice any subtle changes in the men's behaviour and gather important intelligence. However, this may have had some negative impact on the staff-prisoner relationships as the men may have felt they were being too closely observed.

- While difficult to measure and make any assumptions, separation did appear to have had some positive impact on the establishments where men were removed, especially where removal was from main locations. Since the removal of the men, staff commented that wings and/or workshops were more relaxed with better staff/prisoner relationships, improved Muslim/non-Muslim prisoner interactions and less disruptive behaviour. It did not appear that removal had created a power vacuum that was filled by another prisoner.

- The SC may have had the unintended consequence of a potential change in behaviour of extremist prisoners across the prison estate, as those who were most influential/ disruptive appeared to have moderated their behaviour since the opening of the centre. However, respondents acknowledged that this may be for progression reasons rather than concerns about separation. Conversely, it may be that these individuals are still engaging in extremist/problematic behaviour but may be doing so more covertly, so avoiding detection.

4.16   Key challenges, Areas for Improvement/ Lessons Learned

The respondents also identified a number of key challenges and lessons that could be learned in terms of the set-up of separation centres. These are summarised below.

- There were some initial teething problems with the set-up of the centres, particularly in terms of infrastructure. This was largely attributed to the speed at which the centre had been opened and ensuring the needs of the prisoners could be fully met. At follow up interviews any early problems were reported to have been addressed. Time needs to be allowed to ensure infrastructure is in place prior to opening.

- The referral process was considered to need refinement to ensure staff were referring the most appropriate individuals. Consideration should be given to whether the process could be streamlined, as it was reported to be repetitive in places. Referrers also requested detailed feedback on why referrals were unsuccessful as this would assist in guiding them in this process for future referrals, along with a good practice guide including examples. Since the fieldwork was completed, detailed guidance had been produced.

- Low numbers of referrals to the centre was considered to be an issue by many of those interviewed. One of the reasons given for the fewer than expected referrals was because of the low recording of extremism behaviours across the prison estate, especially as such behaviours did not always present the most immediate safety problems or were carried out covertly. What intelligence was generated on an individual often did not meet the threshold required for a referral. It was thought that that this could be improved by better communication with staff on general prison locations, perhaps in the form of regular briefings, to ensure they understood the importance of recording extremist activities and how the information they provided was used, as well as staff training in understanding what behaviours could be considered extremist and what should be reported. It was acknowledged that the ongoing legal action may also have inhibited staff in making some referrals. It was also thought that selection to the SCs was quite rigid, with few prisoners meeting the criteria, especially where all alternative management strategies had been exhausted. It was recognised that each individual would need to be carefully assessed for their suitability. This was especially so where an individual's extremist views and behaviours could be strengthened by separation, particularly among those who have set out to be separated for the purpose of learning more about extremism. It was thought such individuals could be better managed elsewhere in the prison estate.

- All those who had been separated were Islamist extremists. Although staff reported that no prisoners who supported other extremist causes, such as XRW, met the criteria for separation, this is likely to change in the future given the increasing

numbers of perpetrators of XRW offences. It is important that the use of SCs for such prisoners is kept under review and consideration is given to housing problematic XRW perpetrators in the centres should the need arise.

- Consideration needs to be given when separating men who had been convicted of gang-related offences and housing them with convicted extremists. A careful assessment should be made as to whether this could result in a hardening of their views and whether alternative options could be considered.

- A key challenge for centres was that many of the men had refused to engage in aspects of the centres, especially interventions to support disengagement from extremism and address their offending behaviour. They had also become more withdrawn from staff over time. Although it should be noted that most of the men were also not complying with elements of the regimes whilst accommodated in the main prison wings. Consideration needs to be given to how the men can be rehabilitated and progress from the centres if they are not demonstrating reductions in their risk by addressing their offending behaviour. This also has further implications for when they have completed their custodial sentences and released into the community. Consideration also needs to be given to the purpose of the SCs; whether they are intended as a short-term measure to disrupt immediate influence or whether they are intended as a location where influential prisoners will be accommodated over the longer term.

- While it was acknowledged that the introduction of care plans could be a tool to assist the process of progression and de-selection, concerns were raised about how progress would be measured when men refused to engage with the process. The men separated at the time of the fieldwork had not fully engaged with their care plans, which made setting goals and monitoring progress difficult. Consideration needs to be given as to how progress can be identified and measured in such challenging situations. Suggestions were offered that included measuring engagement in other activities such as education and work or whether separation should be seen as a temporary and time limited intervention for some prisoners.

- The role of the Imam was considered to be central to any disengagement work with the separated men. It was noted that the Imams recruited to this role needed to be highly knowledgeable to be able to effectively challenge and offer a different viewpoint. They also needed to be experienced in working with this prisoner group who could be manipulative and liable to disengage as a means of challenging and disrupting the prison regime. This was especially so in terms of gaining the trust of the men but at the same time being a supportive member of the SC staffing team.

Consideration also needs to be given to how Imams can provide a supportive function to the SCs where the men do not engage with collective worship. Concerns were raised about the current terms and conditions for Imams and whether they would attract and retain the highest calibre applicants to the SCs. It was also noted that systems needed to be in place to ensure Imams were fully supported in their very challenging role and given sufficient supervision and guidance. It was also recognised that the role of the Imam could be time consuming and demanding, so it is important to ensure adequate resources are provided. Since the fieldwork was carried out, training for Imams has been revised, with specific interventions developed, which should go some way to supporting them in their role.

- The mental health of the men should continue to be reviewed and referrals made to specialist practitioners where appropriate. It was noted that, given some of the men were housed in the centres over long periods of time, they may be at an increased risk of developing mental health issues, particularly as the number of prisoners with whom they could associate was small and the close scrutiny from a high staffing ratio.

- Some concern was expressed about the lack of communication between SC staff and those elsewhere who were involved in the SC delivery. Systems should be put in place to ensure there is good communication across all staffing teams. For example, CTU staff at one centre spoke of the benefits of being included in daily briefings. SC staff at one centre also requested having more information on legal challenges from litigation teams and thought this would greatly assist their work.

- Consideration should be given to the ongoing training needs of SC staff, which could be in the form of top up training. There may also be merit in the training for CTU staff to support them in identifying and referring suitable individuals to house in SCs.

5.   Conclusion

This qualitative process study examined the set up and early implementation of two separation centres to hold the most influential extremist prisoners in specialist units. The aims of the centres are to remove extremist prisoners from the mainstream prison population who pose a particularly serious risk to ensure the maintenance of control, security and discipline within prison and to manage terrorism related risks posed by certain prisoners. Findings should be viewed in light of the methodological limitations, which are set out earlier in this report, particularly the lack of engagement from the men accommodated in the SCs. It should also be noted that the SCs had only been established and running for a relatively short period of time during fieldwork and this should be considered when interpreting findings, especially perceived impact.

Respondents reported that two well-run centres had been successfully set up at the time of the final fieldwork visits. There were some clear successes, which included having recruited and retained a highly competent and experienced team of officers to work on the centres and effective multi-disciplinary teams who provided supportive functions; a comprehensive regime and wide range of activities had been established at both centres (although take-up of some of these was low); structured, effective communication systems and the development of a system for monitoring progress (i.e. care plans although again compliance was low). There were some indications in the fieldwork that the centres had been successful in separating some of the most influential extremist offenders from the mainstream prison population, and that this may have helped to reduce disruption at previous locations, however, it is challenging to empirically measure the direct impact of removing these individuals.

While there were clear successes to the setting up SCs, there were some challenges and lessons that could be learned from the experiences at the two centres. The main issue was the fact that the men on the centres had begun, over time, to disengage from many activities on the centres, especially progression and rehabilitation work. This meant that the men were not able to demonstrate any progress needed to allow a move from the centres back into mainstream locations. Consideration needs to be given as to the purpose of SCs in such situations, whether they are intended as a short-term measure to disrupt the immediate influence of a prisoner or whether they are viewed as a long-term location. If it is intended that separated individuals will progress from the centres, a clearer de-selection route should be identified, including what should be provided for evidence of progression and what steps should be taken if individuals do not engage with the centres. However, it should also be

noted that lack of engagement was not necessarily a result of being accommodated on the SC given that most of these men had also not fully engaged with disengagement work while in their previous prison locations.

Further areas for improvement included the need to review and refine the referral process, including a review of the selection criteria and development of more detailed guidance and feedback on unsuccessful referrals, some of which has now been put in place. The issue of lower than expected numbers of referrals could be improved via regular estate-wide staff briefings or training regarding reporting extremist behaviours. Consideration should also be given to the workload, recruitment, retention and support for Imams working in the centres, ensuring their skills and knowledge are utilised in the best possible way for the centres. A standard and consistent regime across all SCs should be established and any ambiguities in the operation manual smoothed out to ensure clear guidance for staff, which is currently being revised. In addition, consideration should be made to the possible long term effects of separation on mental health, and the impact of this on those serving long term sentences. Finally, consideration could be given as to whether other groups of extremist offenders such as extreme right wing should be separated, especially given their increasing numbers in the criminal justice system. SCs have been set up so they can hold any type of extremist prisoner. This could be carried out by using a split regime, or risk assessing co-location. At the time of the fieldwork, no such prisoners were considered by those who were interviewed to be sufficiently problematic to warrant separation, but this may change in the future and should be under regular review.

This qualitative study provides insight from staff and stakeholders into the set up and early implementation of two SCs. Further research and analysis would need to be considered to assess delivery once the centres have had time to embed sustainable practices into their operations.

6.   References

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Appendix A

Interviews conducted as part of the Separation Centre process study

Date	Interviews completed
Separation Centre Sites	
Separation Centre 1	
Study visit 1 **July 2017**	14 staff interviews.
Study visit 2 **October 2017**	18 staff interviews.
Study visit 3 **October 2018**	14 staff interviews.
Separation Centre 2	
Study visit 1 **May 2018**	10 staff interviews.
Study visit 2 **November/December 2018**	14 staff interviews.
Key Stakeholders	
September 2017	6 interviews.
April 2018	6 interviews.
CTU Staff	
August 2017	5 interviews.
July 2018	5 interviews.
Previous Location Sites	
First month removed	36 interviews across locations.

Appendix B
Scoping for an outcome study

There are clear merits to conducting an outcome study of SCs, especially as they are a new initiative for HMPPS, with little international research having previously been carried out that can be drawn upon.

Timing for the implementation of an outcome study is important. An outcome study should not be commissioned until the early process study has been completed and any findings/recommendations for delivery have been addressed. There also needs to be sufficient time for all the centres to open and to be filled, with individuals having progressed off the centres/ moved between centres/ left custody so progression and moves can be reviewed.

Conducting an outcome study that is intended to measure the impact of SCs does present many methodological challenges that need to be considered in any design. For example, extremist attitudes and behaviour are difficult to reliably record, quantify and measure, so it may not be possible to accurately measure changes in these over time. In addition, the SCs are available for use across the entire prison estate, with referrals being made from any establishment. This means there is no comparison site against which the impact of SCs could be measured and may limit the design of an outcome study. It may be possible to match and compare individuals who are then allocated to 'separation' or 'non-separation', but this could present security problems with individuals not being separated despite their risk. Another difficulty in measuring impact is the small number of men who have been located on the SCs. Given the current capacity and throughput of men, it would take many years for a sufficient volume of data to accrue to allow any change to be measured statistically.

Despite the challenges described above, one of the aims of this study was to explore whether any data was being collected and the feasibility of using such data in conducting an impact study. Intelligence data is being gathered across the LTHSE by CT teams. However, this data has a number of limitations for use in an outcome study. Intelligence on all SC prisoners is gathered and analysed by a specialist team and key information compiled into a weekly report. Intelligence information could provide useful data for measuring any impact of the centres. However, this information is in a qualitative form so would be resource intensive to code and analyse. As the data is collated primarily for operational reasons, it may also not contain all the information needed for evaluation purposes. Also, it is not collected to an

agreed schema, and there may not be consistency in the way it is collected by staff and across sites, as would be expected of research data. The information obtained may also not reflect any real impact and disengagement of the men from the causes they support, merely that they are being more convert and careful, knowing their interactions are closely monitored. The men are also limited in terms of who they can correspond with, which may curtail their activities.

This study has found interviewing staff from the wings where the men have been removed provides a qualitative assessment, from one perspective, of the impact of their removal. This may be a possible methodology for an outcome study, especially given the low number of men who would be included. However, interview data are subjective, as they are based on the views and perceptions of those interviewed and will not provide an objective 'measure' of change. It would also be time-consuming to collect, especially if conducted over the longer-term. There is also no comparison against which to measure data. Intelligence and behavioural data could be collected from wings where the men had been removed and compared pre and post removal. However, this data may not provide a reliable measure to examine any pre and post behavioural change as it is dependent upon accurate recording of behaviours in a format that could be systematically coded and used for research purposes. It was noted in this study that not all extremist behaviour was being formally recorded by wing staff. This was thought to be because such behaviour may not cause immediate safety problems especially compared to other issues such as bullying, the consumption and trading of drugs and violence. Therefore, there may be an under-reporting of such issues. There are also difficulties in terms of the covert nature of the behaviours that would need to be measured to examine change and the extent to which such behaviours are observed by staff, further reducing the accuracy of recording. Where several men are moved simultaneously it may also be difficult to measure the impact of one individual having been separated. In addition, there is no means of comparing this against a regime that does not have SCs, so the differences cannot be entirely attributed to the SCs alone (as described above).

The ERG22+ assessment and care plans could provide a useful source of data for an outcome study to measure progression of men on the centre. Whilst this is currently limited because of lack of engagement among the current cohort of men, this may change over time as the population of the SCs changes and dynamics of the men evolves. However, use of both these tools would need to be carefully considered and are likely to have limitations as neither have been designed for research purposes. The authors are also not aware of a measure of desistance and disengagement from extremism that has been validated for this population which could be introduced as a measure.

Overall, this study concluded that conducting an impact study would present considerable methodological challenges and it would be difficult to empirically measure whether the aims of the centres are being met, especially with the challenges in measuring extremist behaviours, the data that is presently available, the small number of men in the centres, throughput and the absence of a comparator.