

SAFESOC NEWSLETTER - PROJECT END

October 2024



The £1.1m UKRI funded [SAFESOC](#) research project aims to reconceptualise prison regulation for safer societies. This difficult multidisciplinary challenge demands academic innovation. Implementation requires sustained collaboration with local and (trans)national practitioners from different sectors (e.g. public, voluntary), regulators, policymakers, and prisoners. Based at the [University of Nottingham](#), SAFESOC is generously funded through Dr Philippa Tomczak's prestigious [UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship](#), and sits within the '[Prisons, Health and Societies](#)' Research Group. This study runs from 2020-2027.

In This Issue

- **Project summary**
- **SAFESOC collaboration wins The Sheila McKechnie Foundation Creative Change-makers Award**
- **Updates from the team**
- **Join our team**
- **Contact us**

Learning from Death Investigations event

The *Learning from Death Investigations* event took place at Manchester Art Gallery from 11th – 12th September 2024, drawing together people who have worked on different types of death investigations. The event sought to assemble academic experts from multiple areas of inquiry and was attended by academic researchers and practitioners from Australia, England and Scotland working in criminology, forensic medicine, social sciences, health sciences, social work and social

care, gender and equalities, psychology and safeguarding. More details are available in our event report. We are excited to see how this work will continue over coming years!

SAFESOC collaboration wins The Sheila McKechnie Foundation Creative Change-makers Award



The “Woodhill” film and theatre project was awarded The Sheila McKechnie Foundation ***Creative Change-makers Award*** at a ceremony in London on 15th May 2024. The project raised awareness of prison suicide, associated harms, and how multisectoral regulators could help to reduce harms.

The SAFESOC research team (Prof. Philippa Tomczak and Dr Gill Buck) worked with LUNG Theatre and the Woodhill Families Group to co-create a campaign advocating penal reform. This involved:

- **A film** centring one mother’s experience of losing a son in prison and the resulting death investigations, seeking to inspire systemic improvements, presented at conferences (including to the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions), and to the House of Lords.
- **A documentary play** touring to 3,573 people across the nation.
- **A media public awareness campaign** reaching 1.19 million people.
- **A training package of two short films** co-created by the Woodhill Families group.
- **A policy brief** presented at the House of Lords ([Improving death investigations to promote safety - September 2023](#)).
- **A series of consultative meetings with ministers** about improving conditions at HMP Woodhill and across the wider prison estate.

The full award nomination can be read [here](#).

The award ceremony can be viewed [here](#).

Update - Prof Philippa Tomczak



Philippa is currently finalising award outputs, prioritising the dissemination of our policy briefs ([Prisoner death statistics policy brief - October 2024](#) & [Improving death investigations to promote safety - September 2023](#)), which will be presented at an international workshop for detention monitors run by *Penal Reform International* in October 2024 and as an invited Scientific Expert at the Council of Europe Council for Penological Co-operation plenary meeting (Strasbourg, France) in November 2024. Philippa is most grateful for the funding and support of UKRI in enabling this Fellowship work and wishes to thank the full research and administration team, and the project advisory board that have kindly contributed to the success of this project.

Update - Dr Gill Buck



Dr Gill Buck presented at the **British Society of Criminology Conference** in Glasgow in July 2024. Her paper critically reflected on a collaboration between the SAFESOC team, a theatre company and a bereaved mother, which aimed to raise awareness of prison suicide, and centre marginalised voices in reducing societal harms, using verbatim film. Prisoner suicide rates are consistently higher than

rates among communities living outside. Yet, campaigns by prisoners' families have had material effects. Drawing upon interviews with the film makers and audience surveys, Gill examined the potentials and challenges of such collaborations, concluding that film can engage audiences, make complex subjects accessible, and potentially inspire broader social change. However, a sustained ethic of care and openness regarding power relations is required to mitigate potential harms and manage expectations. This article is under peer review at present.

Gill, Philippa and colleagues recently published an article focused on the value of collective autoethnography for co-producing prisons knowledge: **Buck, G., Page, R., Harriott, P., & Tomczak, P. (2024). Co-creating prisons knowledge inspired by collective autoethnography. *Prison Service Journal***. Following publication, Gill was invited to a round table at the British Society of Criminology chaired by Professor Shadd Maruna, to discuss knowledge equity efforts in criminology.

Gill, Philippa and Kaitlyn Quinn (Syracuse University, USA) also recently published an article which explores the analytical and theoretical potential of emotion-metaphors for criminology, using research conducted with penal voluntary sector actors: **Quinn, K., Buck, G., & Tomczak, P. (2024). Mobilizing Metaphors in Criminological Analysis: A Case Study of Emotions in the Penal Voluntary Sector. *The British Journal of Criminology***.

Gill planned and ran a SAFESOC dissemination and network building event: ***Learning across death investigations***, which tookplace at Manchester Art Gallery in September 2024.

Building on the skills and experience gained within the SAFESOC project, Gill has been successful in securing her own [UKRI future leader's fellowship](#), which will run from November 2024 - October 2028, undertaking the first major study of participatory criminal justice across the United Kingdom and Ireland. Gill will document historical and current approaches to 'co-produced' criminal justice and collaborate with stakeholders, including artists using speculative design practices, to explore future possibilities.

Gill would like to thank the Philippa for the opportunity to learn about leading a large research grant and the SAFESOC team for a wonderful, collaborative learning experience.

Update - Dr Rebecca Banwell-Moore



We were sorry to say goodbye to Rebecca when her project contract ended in August 2024.

Update - Dr Cathie Traynor



We were sorry to say goodbye to Cathie when her project contract ended in August 2024.

Update - Sara Hyde



Sara submitted her PhD thesis in September 2024, entitled 'Physically efficient, psychologically detached': prison healthcare staff experiences of, impacts from, and strategies for, working with prisoner self-harm and suicides. She is writing up two papers from the PhD, one on staff experiences of coronial inquests and one called *Pockets of Hope*, about how staff sustain themselves when working with prisoner suicide and self-harm. She is speaking to Health and Justice professionals about her findings at events in October and December 2024.

Join Our Team

Philippa particularly welcomes inquiries from prospective collaborators, postdoctoral researchers, PhD students and voluntary organisations seeking to analyse the following areas: death in criminal justice detention; (prisoner) death investigations; [the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman](#); Coroner [Prevention of Future Death reports](#) relating to state detention; intersections between imprisonment, mental health detention and immigration detention; prison(er) health; prisoner healthcare; prison safety.

Contact Us

To find out more or to be kept informed about the progress of this work, please email:

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