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## Letters to the Editor



### Prison reform

Sir, Liz Truss's announcement of an increase in prison staff numbers is welcome. But for our jails to become safer in the longer term there needs to be fresh thinking on the role and training of prison officers. As I know from first-hand experience, prison officers deserve better recognition for doing their jobs well in difficult circumstances. However, they need longer and deeper initial training than the present inadequate eight-week induction course. From the outset they should be encouraged to become rehabilitators as well as turnkeys.

One symbolic step in this direction would be to rename their profession the Prison and Rehabilitation Service. Some enlightened officers already do the latter part of this work voluntarily.

For example at HMP Leeds, the officers Steve Freer and Val Wawrosz have started a charity, Tempus Novo, which in the past year has found jobs for over 50 prisoners among local employers in Leeds, Bradford and Halifax with an 80 per cent success rate. The scheme is set to expand into all prisons in Yorkshire.

The job satisfaction that often comes with this work suggests that the recruitment and motivation of prison officers will be more effective if they train to become rehabilitators as well as jailers.

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