**Experiencing long-term imprisonment from young adulthood:   
Identity, adaptation and penal legitimacy**

**Dr Ben Crewe, Dr Susie Hulley, Dr Serena Wright**

**Who are we?**

We are experienced prison researchers, who work at the Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge. We do not work for the Prison Service. Our study is funded independently, by the Economic and Social Research Council.

**Why are we doing this study?**

We are interested in finding out more about the experiences of prisoners who are given very long sentences (over 15 years) when they are aged 25 or under. We are particularly interested in how you cope with your sentence, what relationships you have formed with other prisoners and with staff, and how you feel generally about your sentence. We think that our study will help the Prison Service, and other researchers, understand more about what it is like to be in your position.

**What will participation involve?**

Participation will involve two interviews. In the first interview, we will ask you to tell us about the story of your life so far. In the second interview, we will ask you all kinds of questions about your time in prison so far and your feelings about yourself and your sentence.

We would also like your permission to access your records from the National Offender Management System. We are mainly interested in information such as your transfers between prisons, the courses you have completed, and any adjudications you have received.

It is possible that, in a few years from now, we will try to interview you again, to see how your situation and feelings have changed. We will need your permission to obtain your PNC, or ‘Police National Computer’ number, in order to locate you in the future. If we wish to contact you at this later date, we will do so by letter – you will then have the choice as to whether you participate in any further research.

**Do I have to take part in the study?**

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you do not want to take part, you do not have to, and this will not disadvantage you in any way.

**Are there any risks involved in taking part?**

During the interview you will be asked to discuss your background and your experiences of your sentence. Some questions might also ask you to think about things you have not previously thought about, or choose not to think about. Depending on your circumstances, this might trigger some unhappy or upsetting thoughts. However, you do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to, and time will be given at the end of the interview to discuss anything you may have found difficult. If you find the interview distressing, you can stop at any time, and we can advise you on who, in the prison, you could talk to about your feelings.

**Are there any benefits in taking part?**

We cannot pay you for taking part in the study, but if you agree to take part and are interviewed when you would normally be working or in education, you will not lose any pay. Taking part in the study will not affect your privilege level or any decision about your parole or release.

You may, however, feel that talking about your experiences of prison is useful or helpful to you. People who we have interviewed in the past have often welcomed the chance to speak to someone neutral, who is willing to listen to them. You will also be contributing to our understanding of prison life.

**Will what I say be kept confidential?**

The information you share in the interview will normally be kept completely confidential. However, the researcher will be obliged to pass on to a member of prison staff any information regarding:

* A breach of prison security
* Any further offences you admit to that you have not yet been convicted for
* Any breach of prison rules that occurs during the interview
* Anything you say that implies a threat to yourself or to others

In all other circumstances, everything you say will remain confidential. The information you provide will be stored securely, for an indefinite period. The only people who will have access to your interview are the research team and the person who turns the recording of your interview into a typed file.

**Will my contribution remain anonymous?**

If you agree to the researchers using quotes from the interviews, this will be done in such a way that you cannot be identified. We will give you a different name and will change any details about your life which would ‘give away’ who you are.

**How do I agree to take part in the study?**

If you agree to take part, you will be asked to complete a consent form, confirming that you understand what the study involves and have had a chance to discuss any questions with the researcher. You will also be asked to state whether you are happy for the interview to be recorded.

**What if I want to withdraw from the study?**

You are free to stop an interview or refuse to take part in any further interviews at any stage during the research process, without having to explain why you want to stop. You can also insist that the content of your interviews so far is excluded from the study, without having to explain why. You may make this decision at any point up until 30thJune 2015, when we will begin writing the research findings. If you make this decision, we will destroy your interview recording and any associated material. Making this decision will not be held against you or disadvantage you in any way.

**Where can I go for support should participation in the research cause me anxiety or distress?**

If, once you have finished the interview, you feel that some of the things that you have talked about have made you to feel anxious or distressed, there are a number of ways that you can access support:

* You can speak to a member of staff or ask the researcher to contact a member of staff who you would like to talk to.
* You can contact a peer support worker, such as a Listener, or we will contact on your behalf another prisoner in your establishment to let them know that you would like their support.
* You can contact the Samaritans, whose number will be printed on posters on your wing.

**What will happen to the results of the study?**

Your interview may contribute to various publications that we will write about the issues we are interested in. These will mainly be academic articles and books. The findings may also be discussed in other academic publications written by the researchers, and in discussions or presentations with members of the Prison Service or the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), as well as other university researchers. Again, this would be done in such a way that you could not be personally identified.

**What if I want more information about the study, or want to complain about some aspect of it?**

The study has been reviewed by the Ethics Committee of the Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge. If you would like more information or have any questions or complaints about the research please feel free to speak to us directly. If you do not wish to pursue your question or complaint in this way, you should contact Ruth Mann, who will either deal with the issue themselves or pass it on to the research team, where relevant. Ruth Mann’s contact details are:

Ruth Mann

5th Floor

Clive House

70 Petty France

London

SW1P 9EH

**Thank you for your time in reading this information. If you have any further questions at any stage of the research, please do not hesitate to ask one of us.**

**Dr Ben Crewe**

**Dr Susie Hulley**

**Ms Serena Wright**