

# Prisons and The Salvation Army



A collection of 'pick and mix' activities to explore how The Salvation Army supports people in prison. There is an optional Covid-19 focus which you can explore with your group. Slides two and three are core slides, all activities can be adapted to suit your group.

## Lesson objectives:

- To understand how The Salvation Army supports people in prison
- To explore our own attitudes to people in prison

## Resources needed:

- Prison lesson plan
- Prison PowerPoint presentation
- Sticky notes



### Slide 1 Title slide

Introduce yourself and share the title of the lesson and learning objectives.



### Slide 2 The Salvation Army

Complete the quick 'true or false' quiz to give a brief overview of The Salvation Army, and tell the group today you'll be looking at one part of The Salvation Army's work in particular today – with prisons. More information is provided about false statements in the notes section on the presentation.



### Slide 3 Why work in prisons?

Share the quote made by one of The Salvation Army's founders, William Booth. Take some suggestions as to what the students think he meant by 'I'll fight'.

*'For many, the struggle for social justice seems very much like a fight. Day in and day out they strive to overcome such things as poverty, hunger, addiction and violence. The Salvation Army stands on the front lines with these people, fighting for them and alongside them.'*

– Salvation Army Canada



### Slide 4 Supporting people in prison

There are four statements about the work of The Salvation Army in prisons. Currently, the order of these does not make best sense. Have the students work together to read through the statements and reorder them to make a cohesive paragraph.

*The Salvation Army's prison work is inspired by the words of Jesus when he said, 'When I was in prison, you came to visit me.'*

*Believing that the love of God is unconditional, Salvation Army chaplains come alongside prisoners in Christ's name in a ministry of practical, non-judgemental caring.*

*Chaplains also support prison staff, who work tirelessly in a particularly challenging environment.*



The Salvation Army also runs CAMEO ('Come And Meet Each Other') groups in a few prisons. These typically target elderly prisoners, who are the fastest-growing prison demographic. CAMEO is a space for positive transformation, extended learning, and safe community.

Once the new order has been established, have a student read through the whole paragraph and discuss some interesting thoughts that the group may have pulled out from the paragraph. Such as:

'Elderly prisoners are the fastest-growing demographic.' Does this surprise you? Why might this be the case?

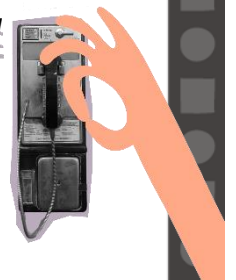


### Slide 5 Pandemic in prison

Give students some sticky notes and have them write (on separate sheets) how lockdown in prison may have been different from any other day in prison, and how the people in prison may have been affected by lockdown. Once done, have the students stick up their notes on the board or on a wall and go through their responses, prompting further explanation where needed.

Some students think life in prison may have been no different during the pandemic, but you can share any or some of the following:

- *Staffing levels were an issue, as prison officers would have to shield or self-isolate – one of The Salvation Army's chaplains noted that at one point there were 150 staff members off work.*
- *'From mid-March 2020 until around Feb 2021 almost all people in prison in the UK spent 23 hours or more out of every day locked in a cell, typically around 3m by 2m in size. Two-thirds of them would have been in conditions that amount to solitary confinement, the other third are sharing a cell, or in dormitory accommodation.'*  
[prisonreformtrust.org.uk](http://prisonreformtrust.org.uk)
- *Two quotes from prisoners from a government inquiry:*
  - *'Covid-19 means all of us are to one extent or another emotionally scarred.'*
  - *'At weekends we could be in this solitary confinement for 60 hours at a time.'*  
[Mental Health in Prison \(parliament.uk\)](http://Mental Health in Prison (parliament.uk))
- *'It is important to know that people in prison generally have worse mental and physical health than people in the community.'*  
[rcplondon.ac.uk](http://rcplondon.ac.uk)
- *It has been particularly difficult to maintain family ties – visits were cancelled for a long time and although 'purple visits' (video visits) were implemented, they couldn't replace real-life contact.*
- *Chaplains reported a higher demand for bereavement support, as many prisoners (and members of staff) experienced loss.*
- *Many prisoners due to be released were terrified of returning to the outside world under such unfamiliar circumstances, particularly those who had been in prison for a long period of time.*
- *Prisoners and staff both struggled with anxieties around safety, uncertainty and worrying about their families.*



## Slide 6 Friend or foe?

Some students may feel apathetic about people in prison, but now is the chance for them to voice their opinions! Show the statement 'People in prisons don't deserve help' and gauge the group's opinions on this.

**Option 1:** This can be done as a debate by splitting the group into two sides – those who agree and those who disagree. Give them time to come up with their arguments (as well as think of rebuttals to the opposing opinion) and then engage in a peaceful debate. Note: you may need to set out some ground rules before this starts, for example only the person with the (*object*) can speak. No name-calling etc. If the two sides are vastly imbalanced with the number of students, you may need to allocate students a particular side and have them debate against their personal opinions – great for critical thinking!

**Option 2:** A silent debate. Get a large piece of paper, write a statement at the top and each person that comes up must write underneath the statement: an agreement, a disagreement, or a question. For example:

- Student one: They've done something wrong, so they deserve to be punished.
- Student two: But how can prisoners learn to live differently if they don't have help?
- Student three: What happens if a prisoner refuses help?

Several silent debates can be going on at the same time. Once the students are done, go through the arguments and see if the group can agree to any conclusions.

Here are some more suggested headings, but students may propose others:

- Everyone deserves a second chance – even if you have committed a crime
- Prison should be a place of punishment
- Prison punishes more than just prisoners
- Prison is the best place to keep prisoners



After discussing the issue, click the slide and read Jesus' words in Mark 2:17. Explain that The Salvation Army understands people (and those in prison) are not perfect, and The Salvation Army believes everyone deserves to be helped.



## Slide 7 Prison chaplain video

Watch the first **3 mins 40 secs** of the video [The Big Collection 2022 | Chaplaincy | The Salvation Army - YouTube](#) . Click the play button or anywhere in the image to play.

The video shows a Salvation Army chaplain at work and the importance of what she does. Remind students that chaplains provide pastoral support to both prisoners and staff. This includes the 'normal' everyday prison duties such as checking up on new arrivals, providing pastoral care for those who struggle with mental health / self-harm, and bereavement support. A chaplain's job is to walk alongside people and support them in what they're facing.

Lesley became involved with supporting people in prison when, on her 50th birthday, she made a list of things she wanted to do. Give the class time to think if there's anything they would like to commit to doing by their next birthday.



### Slide 8 Prison chaplains

Show two quotes from Salvation Army chaplains about their work in prison, to emphasise that people in prison are still people. They are treated with respect regardless of why they are in prison, following Jesus' example.

If you're doing this session around Christmas, you may also want to read about how chaplains make Christmas special for people in prison. **Bringing light to the darkness for prisoners at Christmas | The Salvation Army**



### Slide 9 No judgement

Students may still struggle with the idea of helping people in prison – and that's OK. This activity should challenge their right to judge others. Some are silly examples, others a bit deeper. Feel free to edit the examples presented and add in any other examples you can think of. Click the slide to reveal the next scenario.

You can do this activity by setting up an opinion line: 'Judge them' on the right, 'Don't judge them' on the left. Phrase the question: 'You spot someone *"doing x activity"* – do you judge them or not?'

Go through each example probing the students for their rationale. Make a mental note of anyone who seems to contradict their original opinions and question this. For example, if some judge negatively if someone steals sweets but not nappies, question why this is different. Feign cluelessness to prompt responses – for example, surely stealing is stealing?



### Slide 10 Questions

Finish by asking the students to think about all they've discovered in the lesson and to think about what else they may still like to know. You can collate some questions and ask The Salvation Army by emailing [prison.ministries@salvationarmy.org.uk](mailto:prison.ministries@salvationarmy.org.uk)

