

## A Prisoner in Close Supervision Centre.

A secret world exists within the high security prison estate in England, known as the Close Supervision Centre (CSC) system. It is notorious amongst the few who know of it, a place only the most unfortunate men ever see. Reports of serious mistreatment and torture are routine from the victims detained within the CSC, but almost nothing is ever done about the biggest demonstration of inhumanity to take place in this country.

In order to excuse this torture chamber, the dehumanization of CSC prisoners begins at a very early stage of official justifications for the creation of the CSC system, which focus on the need to contain a new breed of unmanageable and unpredictable risks. It continues with the creation of classificatory categories of 'dangerousness' which objectify prisoners and make more of the category and less of the human in them, and it is reinforced by the tightly controlled and highly regulated routines in CSC's, treating prisoners as highly dangerous creatures, capable of superhuman acts of violence – not quite human and in need of the extreme oppression the CSC provides.

When it comes to the 'worst of the worst', isolation is wrongly seen as a necessity but insufficient measure by prison management. In addition to isolation and extremely restricted movements, prisoner in-cell provisions and their belongings are carefully regulated and subjected to relentless scrutiny and inspection. Detailed attention to security concerns are always maintained even though the majority of these concerns are baseless, and daily operations and procedures are pre-planned according to worst-case scenarios. Prisoners remain in CSC units for years, decades even, made frustrated, angry and bored by their experiences with few avenues to vent their anger and with almost no opportunities to advance through the system. All perceived acts of disobedience or non-compliance by CSC prisoners, even of the most minor or petty, are responded to forcefully and brutally by gangs of prison officers clad in full riot gear who show no mercy when regaining complete control and demonstrating their authority and power, sanctioned by Prison Service management at the highest levels. The official reason for all forms of hypercontrol over CSC prisoners are security considerations, but rather than controlling violence, as they officially aim to do, such highly controlled environments breed it as well as causing severe suffering for prisoners.

Since CSC guards are directly authorised to perform acts involving the use of force and over-diligence in carrying out their tasks is always tolerated if not encouraged by their superiors, they do not need to engage in soul-searching moral assessment of the treatment of prisoners labeled as the 'worst-of-the-worst'. The social distancing between 'us' and 'them' instilled by the CSC training provided to prison officers urged to see themselves as a 'team', and environment of the CSC allows for the treatment of prisoners in a way that would have been inconceivable had the guards viewed them as people like themselves. As Garland (1990) found ".....professional penal agents [who] tend to represent themselves in a positive, utilitarian way, as offering a particular service, or carrying out a useful social task, as a way of avoiding bad conscience and cultural infancy", are unlikely to come forward with the

truth of how badly they treat CSC prisoners or take the necessary steps to improve the conditions within these hell-holes.

On top of the brutality is the psychological assault on CSC prisoners which works in two parallel dimensions, isolation increases levels of frustration and anxiety, and it also decreases the available avenues for relaxing such tensions. A study by McCleery (1961) noted that over time, symptoms experienced by isolated prisoners are likely to mature into either homicidal or suicidal behaviour. Rather than controlling violence then, CSC confinement leads to irritability, anger, and violent outbursts which can seem unprovoked.

Having now spent 6 years subjected to the unofficial punishment of allocation to the CSC myself, it is clear that without real pressure to force the required change nothing but more negative and oppressive measures will be added. With it known that “oppression and ugliness can only lead to alienation and aggression” Fairweather (2000), it makes you wonder if Prison Service management want this or are too stupid to consider the impact of their actions. With the way the media were manipulated following the suicide of Joanne Latham on the CSC last year, maybe the arrogance of the management leads them to believe that whatever the consequences of the CSC system, they can deal with them as they have done since it was created in 1998.

Please lend your support for the abolition of the CSC system by attending the protest demonstration on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> July between 12.30pm and 2.30pm, and sign the petition on [www.change.org/p/justice-for-kevan](http://www.change.org/p/justice-for-kevan)  
Together we can make a difference.

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[www.justiceforkevan.com](http://www.justiceforkevan.com)  
[www.Facebook.com/JusticeForKev](http://www.Facebook.com/JusticeForKev)*

*Support Kev by joining the protest:  
Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> February 12.30pm – 2.30pm  
HM Prison Service Headquarters  
Clive House, 70 Petty France, London SW1H 9EX  
OR sign the petition on: [www.change.org/p/justice-for-kevan](http://www.change.org/p/justice-for-kevan)*