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“Now it's about survival for me”:

Applying the Power Threat Meaning Framework  
to narratives of prison governors to understand  
the impact on wellbeing

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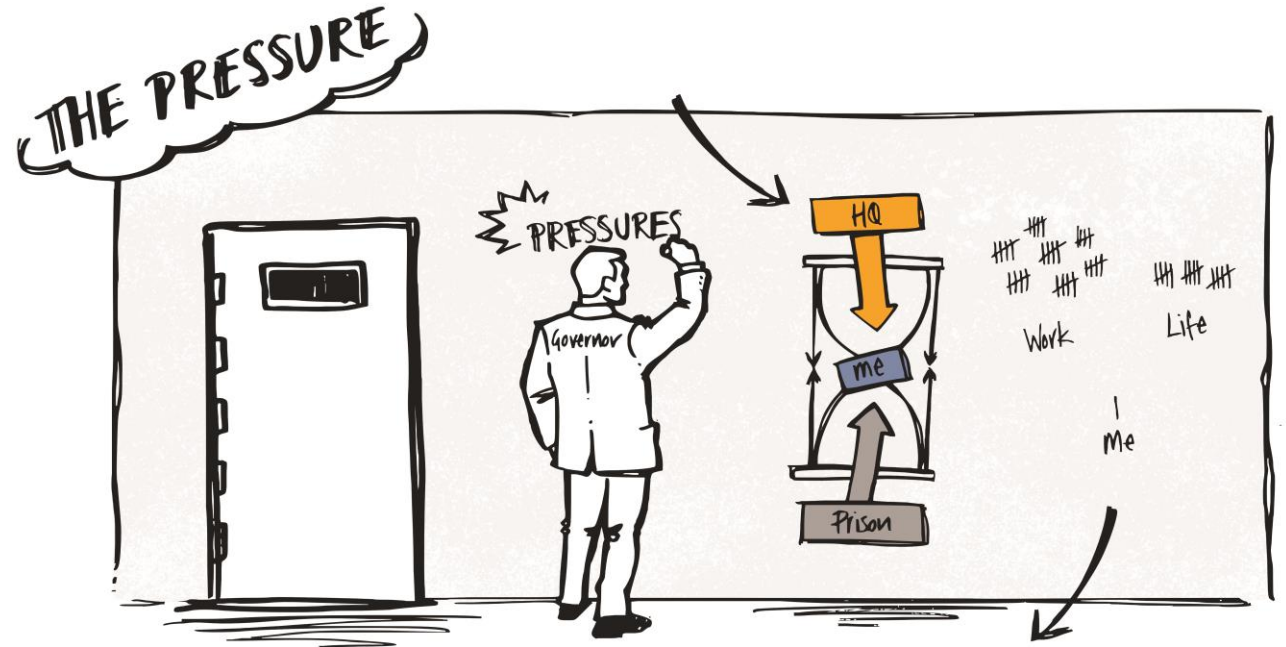
# Background

63 prison governors or operational managers

Exploring health and wellbeing

Overall, it was not good and people do not want to/do not feel they can access support

So how can we understand this?



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# Power Threat Meaning Framework

Flaws in the medicalised psychiatric diagnosis and barriers to expressing distress

“Your feelings and reactions are viewed by your social group as beyond what is reasonable, understandable or acceptable”.

Power Threat Meaning Framework (Johnstone and Boyle, 2018)

Help to understand emotional distress

What has happened to you? versus What is wrong with you?

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# What is your story?

**Power**

- **What has happened to you?**

**Threat**

- **How did it affected you?**

**Meaning**

- **What sense did you make of it?**

**Threat Response**

- **What did you have to do to survive?**

**Power Resources**

- **What are your strengths?**

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# Power



“we've been chosen and selected to do this work. And yes, when am I actually going to be trusted to do it in the way that I think is right and safe?”

“I don't feel like they care about people's health and well being... people feel like they're not valued, that the organisation doesn't care”

...”the relationships from the top downwards can be quite bullying, vicious, controlling...”

...your multiple self-harms, multiple deaths in custody over what 20 years, it's not over a short period of time, but the impact of each one, it gets worse and worse and worse”

“the peer pressure was invisible but it was there, that they didn't expect a governor to go off and shield. So I stayed on the whole time, I wanted to anyway”

“There is this so it's so there is this ingrained culture where if you want to do well, it's expected that you just flog yourself”

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# Threat



“I would like to do something that gives me a bit more certainty, even if just for a short while, where the consequences of me getting it wrong are not quite so horrifying”

“my anxiety levels about, you know, how people were getting on. And, you know, we're, you know, whether issues that were, you know, potentially being missed, because I wasn't adding the value that I seek to add”

“I feel like the service has just zapped the life out of me for the last year. And I need a bit of time for me”

“I suppose if that person was, you know, somebody that was your stressor, as a manager and the person that you're having the most difficulty with, and that's the reason why you've gone a little bit, you know, fallen off your rocker a little bit, you wouldn't really want to speak to people about that. There has to be different avenues for that”

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# Meaning



"I've never asked for help since because what's the point, because that is all you'll get, you can't do the job... If you can't do the job, well, we can demote you. If you can't do the job, we can find someone who can replace it"

"So, you knew what you were signing up to. So get on with that kind of thing"

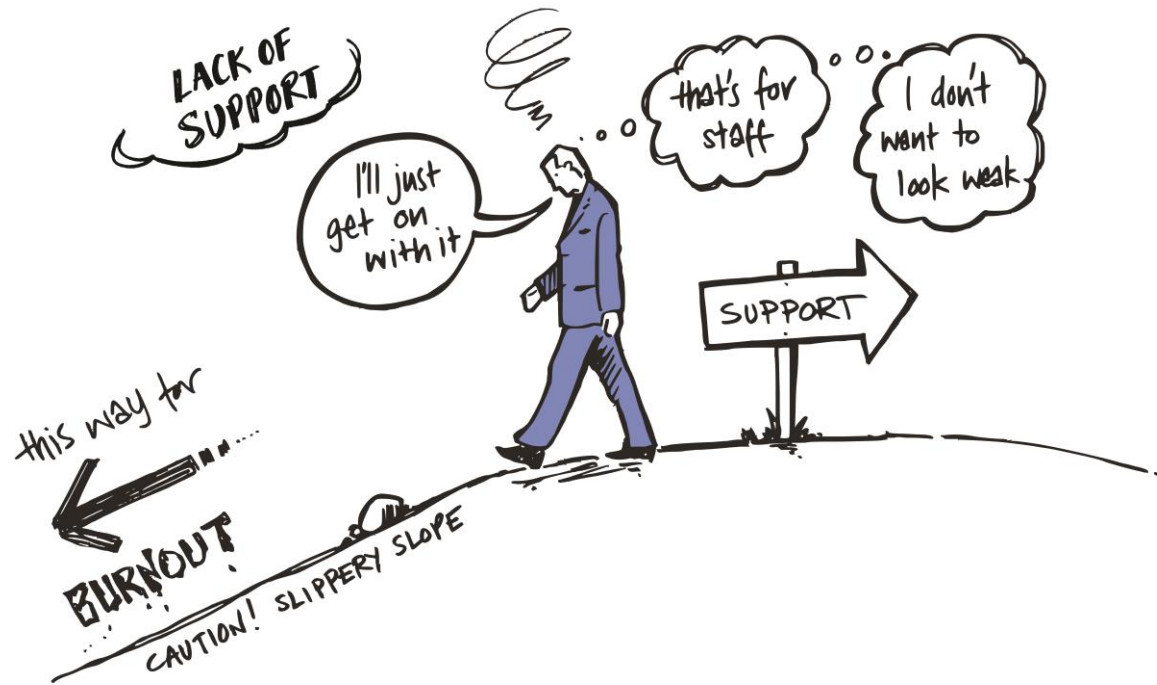
*"I think [poor mental health] would still be seen as a weakness, it can be seen as a chink in your armour"*

*"So, we've got no control over them, but I'm held to account for the results . . . everything is just a nightmare, unless I break the rules"*

*"There is little or no inspiring direction for some of us . . . our abilities, our experience, our skills, are often just . . . taken for granted"*

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# Power Resources



“I care about it. I do love my job. You know, I'm very I'm very proud to be civil servant. I've always been a civil servant, my dad was a civil servant. I think that being allowed to serve the public is it is an honourable thing to do”.

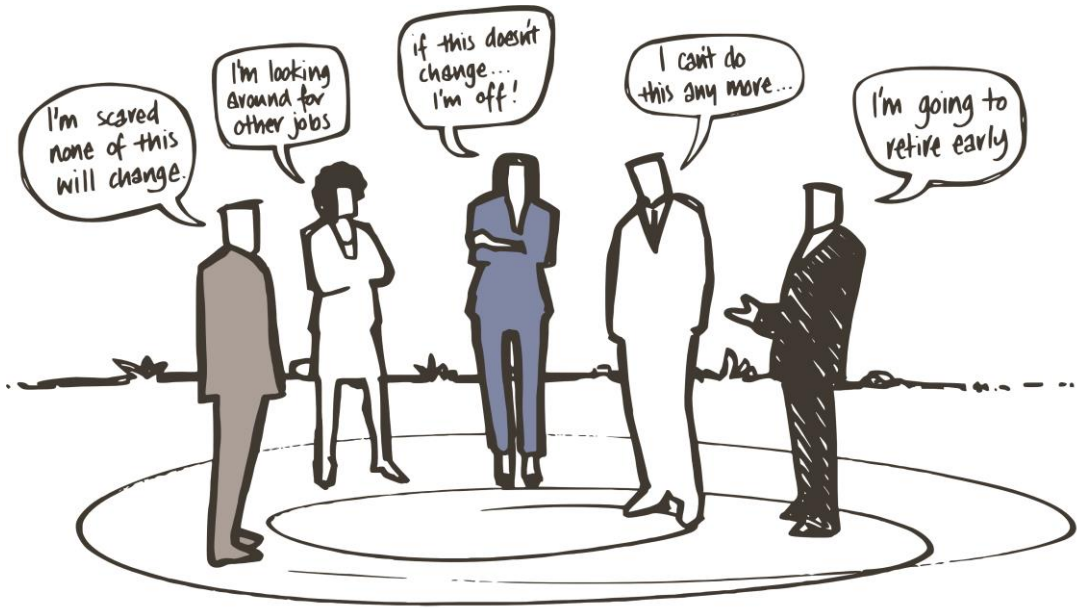
*“. . . they've made us all access a quarterly reflection session, which I was quite dubious about, but it's been quite useful . . .”*

“I get a lot of support from just spending time with people that I've got some rapport with just quietly reflecting over stuff. So, there's a few people that I tend to use as my safe go to people. And it might be that nothing changes in the brief time that I'm sitting in a meeting or sitting in their office or on the phone to them, discussing things. But actually, it, it is healing, just having that space”

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# Threat Response



“people that were being furloughed, made redundant, and I didn't want to be seen like I was being whingy and ungrateful. Actually, what I was doing at that time, was, was really stressful and unhelpful for kind of my mental health, my wellbeing. And I probably didn't manage very well to be honest”

“. . . you just put your big girl pants on and you just go in another day . . .”

“But the risk of burnout is really where it's coming to”

“Tomorrow, if you could turn around and tell me that I could leave the prison service, I would walk out of the jail”

“So then I would we'd go for a walk up the railway lines or whatever. And I began crying without realising it... And then once that's kind of done, it's like a release of tension”

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# How does this help?

Understand what is happening to people and not what is wrong with them

Break the stigma associated with mental health

Explore it as a problem with the system and not the individual

A better understanding of staff wellbeing and how to support people

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# Thanks for Listening



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<https://youtu.be/lfrX3iMAtPM>

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