

Sean

I was delighted when I found out I had been chosen to participate in the HMP Oakwood project as I thought taking part would be hugely beneficial to my studies and help enhance my experience section on my CV. Throughout the three visits I feel as though I have learnt far more about prison and prisoners than I ever could just by reading materials. I found many of my prejudices regarding offenders challenged and I now have a completely different view on the matter (obviously taking into consideration I met just a handful of people).

Taking part in the actual research helped me understand some of the deeper social issues associated with offenders. My primary task was producing a report on the systematic destruction of Crown Court audio files and records. I found this extremely interesting as this is a subject I would know nothing about only by following the curriculum of my course - and I certainly wouldn't have done the research just to satisfy my own curiosity.

My other secondary tasks were to create a report and presentation on the negative impacts of long term sentencing and on discrimination in sentencing. Whilst I already knew about these issues as they are highly documented, I enjoyed the research nonetheless and feel that they have deepened my understanding.

Throughout the whole experience I have learnt how to coordinate my time to juggle the demands of the work and to take more pride in work that won't be marked as I got the opportunity to deliver my findings in person. Actually meeting the prisoners face to face has helped me with speaking to groups (if I can deliver a presentation in prison than anywhere else will be easy!).

To sum up, this project has helped put a lot of my previous legal study into perspective and has certainly had an impact on my future. I plan on attempting to do more volunteer work with the St Giles Trust. I can, and I highly recommend this opportunity to be extended to other students and for those students to take it.